

**“Hearts of Flesh:”  
Collective Identity and the Body in the Book of Ezekiel**

by  
Rosanne R. Liebermann

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland  
June 2019

© 2019 Rosanne R. Liebermann  
All Rights Reserved

## **Abstract**

The book of Ezekiel bears witness to one of the most critical periods for Judean identity formation: the sixth-century BCE forced migrations to Babylonia. It contains an ideology of collective identity which sets the Judean forced migrants apart from the foreign nations surrounding them as well as from the Judeans who remained in Judah.

Previous scholarship has tended to emphasize the rhetorical context of one or the other of these outside groups instead of recognizing the significance of both. Meanwhile, social scientific research into collective identities has shown that they are continually reproduced through social interactions in the material world. Individual bodies are the primary sites of identity expression through activities such as bodily modifications, speech, and other behaviours. An ideology of collective identity outlined in a text must have the capacity to be enacted through the body if it is to be effective. This material aspect of ideology is rarely acknowledged in biblical studies, and the book of Ezekiel is no exception.

Therefore, the current project addresses Ezekiel's approach to the collective identity of the forced migrant Judeans in relation to all proximate external groups, paying especial attention to the way he utilizes bodily symbols of identity. Examining Ezekiel's ideology in this way reveals that he seeks to construct the boundaries of his community by "othering" the practices of foreigners and of the Judeans remaining in Judah. By evoking practices connected with the body in particular, Ezekiel creates an impression of bodies which are inherently different from those of his designated in-group. In so doing, he forms a new ethnic identity for the forced migrant Judeans. Additionally, by describing

bodily practices within his own community, Ezekiel reveals his idealized structure of society in terms of gender stratification and religious hierarchy.

Studying the bodily practices mentioned in the book of Ezekiel helps to explain not only the writer's ideology of group identity but also why it was evidently effective, given the survival of a distinct Judean community in Babylonia. These discoveries contribute to both a synchronic and diachronic understanding of some of the key developments in Judean collective identity.

Advisor:	Theodore J. Lewis
Second Reader:	Alice Mandell
Committee Chair:	Mary Favret
Readers:	Paul Delnero
	Pier Larson

## Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this project without help from a multitude of sources. My advisor, Theodore J. Lewis, provided me with detailed feedback for every draft I gave him – even those far from ready to be seen by anyone else. His guidance, stimulating discussion, and enthusiastic support throughout the PhD programme kept me on track right up to the end. I am also very thankful to Alice Mandell, who came in as an advisor to this project in its final stages. Her ability to identify its contribution in ways I hadn't fully articulated has been of immense help. To Paul Delnero I owe especial thanks for introducing me to the theoretical approaches which inspired this dissertation. His seminar on Mesopotamian ritual was one of the highlights of my graduate student experience and I greatly appreciate his support for this project. Additionally, I would like to thank the outside readers on my committee, Mary Favret and Pier Larson, for providing insightful comments and questions during my defense.

My endeavor to study the Hebrew Bible is largely due to the mentorship of Susan Gillingham at the University of Oxford. Meeting her whilst still in secondary school inspired me to attend Worcester College, where I was introduced to the academic study of the Bible in an incredibly supportive and stimulating environment. If it weren't for Sue, there is little chance this dissertation would exist.

I also owe thanks to the entire Near Eastern Studies department at Johns Hopkins University for substantial financial and educational support. Especial thanks are owed to its amazing administrators, Glenda Hogan and Vonnice Wild, who helped me avoid many a bureaucratic nightmare. I am very grateful for the other sources of financial support I received: the Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Jewish Studies grants, Alvin H. Blum

Fellowship, and Dean's Teaching Fellowship at Johns Hopkins, as well as the George Barton Fellowship at the Albright Institute. I'm also thankful for the opportunities I was given to support myself through working at the Johns Hopkins libraries and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

My fellow students in Near Eastern Studies made the graduate school experience worth having. My good friends and colleagues in Hebrew Bible, Erin Villareal and William Reed, generously shared with me their insights, books, and words of encouragement. The "Calvert House," which at various times included (in addition to myself) Anna Glenn, Ioana Dumitru, Jacob Bongers, and Rania Galal, was a wonderful place to live during the majority of my graduate student years. Its residents were the best housemates and friends I could have had.

Finally, I owe a huge amount of gratitude to my family for all of their love and support. My parents, Howard and Anne Liebermann, have encouraged me wholeheartedly in every endeavor. My parents-in-law, Craig and Anne Patterson, have likewise been a constant source of support, especially during my final year of writing when I spent a good deal of time in Kansas. Most of all, I'm thankful to my husband Patrick Patterson, who has been by my side throughout this entire process. Even though at times the end did not seem to be in sight, he always believed in my ability to succeed and ensured that I did, providing me with a steady flow of meals and pastries to fuel the dissertation writing. It is to him that I dedicate this work.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
 <b>Introduction.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
 <b>Chapter One: Sources, Methodology, and History of Scholarship.....</b>	 <b>7</b>
1.1 Sources.....	7
1.1.1 Ezekiel the Book and Ezekiel the Prophet.....	7
1.1.2 Judeans in Babylonia: The Evidence.....	12
1.2 Methodology.....	29
1.2.1 Collective Identities.....	30
1.2.2 Materiality, the Body, and Identity.....	36
1.2.3 Forced Migrations, Trauma, and Identity.....	46
1.3 History of Scholarship.....	49
1.3.1 Ezekiel's Exilic Setting.....	50
1.3.2 Ezekiel and Collective Identity.....	59
 <b>Chapter Two: Foreign Bodies.....</b>	 <b>66</b>
2.1 Babylon: Textual Influences.....	68
2.1.1 Vocabulary.....	70
2.1.2 Literature.....	83
2.2 Babylon: Non-Textual Influences.....	92
2.2.1 Iconography.....	95
2.2.2 Clothing.....	98
2.2.3 Military Practices.....	110
2.2.4 Religious Practices.....	120
2.3 Other Foreigners.....	130

2.3.1 Assyria.....	134
2.3.2 Egypt.....	143
2.3.3 The Question of Gog.....	147
2.3.4 The Uncircumcised Nations.....	150
2.4 Conclusions.....	153
<b>Chapter Three: The Body Politic.....</b>	<b>155</b>
3.1 Ethnic Origins.....	165
3.1.1 Ezekiel 11:14-21 and 33:23-29.....	167
3.1.2 Ezekiel 16:3-6, 45-47.....	172
3.1.3 Ezekiel 20.....	182
3.1.4 Intermarriage.....	185
3.2 Ritual Practices.....	189
3.2.1 Non-Exclusive Yahwism.....	194
3.2.2 Excursus: Yahweh's Body.....	207
3.2.3 Sacred Time.....	213
3.3 Class Identity.....	225
3.3.1 Religious Misconduct.....	226
3.3.2 Social Misconduct.....	231
3.3.3 Justice, Righteousness, and Leadership.....	234
3.4 Judgement and Restoration.....	239
3.4.1 Bodily Destruction.....	240
3.4.2 Bodily Renewal.....	247
3.5 Conclusions.....	254
<b>Chapter Four: Diverse Bodies.....</b>	<b>256</b>
4.1 Women.....	257
4.1.1 Well-behaved Women.....	259
4.1.2 Badly-behaved Women.....	268
4.1.3 Traumatized Women.....	284
4.2 Priests.....	289

4.2.1 Modifying the Priestly Body.....	295
4.2.2 Purifying the Priestly Body.....	303
4.3 Prophets.....	310
4.3.1 Prophetic Trauma.....	313
4.3.2 False Prophets.....	329
4.4 Conclusions.....	334
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>Curriculum Vitae.....</b>	<b>364</b>



## **List of Tables**

Table I: Vocabulary.....	75
Table II: Literary Motifs.....	87
Table III: Iconography.....	98

## List of Figures

Fig. 1 Map showing locations of cuneiform documents relating to Judeans.....	18
Fig. 2 Map of the ancient Near East in the 6th century BCE.....	25
Fig. 3 Stela of Marduk-apla-iddina, VA 02663.....	105
Fig. 4 Stela of Nabonidus, BM 90837.....	106
Fig. 5 Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Nineveh, BM 124945-6.....	106
Fig. 6 Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Nineveh, BM 124867.....	107
Fig. 7 Detail of Sennacherib wall-panel from Nineveh, BM 124911.....	108
Fig. 8 Detail of Sennacherib wall-panel from Nineveh, BM 124908-9.....	109
Fig. 9 Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Nineveh, AO19909 .....	113
Fig. 10 Drawing of Sargon wall-panel from Khorsabad.....	114
Fig. 11 Drawing of wall-panel from Til Barsip.....	138

## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABL	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i> , ed. R.F. Harper (Chicago, 1892-1914)
AfO	<i>Archive für Orientforschung</i>
AIL	Ancient Israel and its Literature
ANESS	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. James B. Prichard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BaAR	Babylonische Archive
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	<i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> , ed. F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs (Peabody, MA: Hedrickson, 1996).
BE	The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia 1893 ff.)
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , ed. Ignace Gelb et al. (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-2010).
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> , ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1995)
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, trans. M.E.J. Richardson et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994-2000)
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JANEH	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JlATAU	<i>Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University</i>

JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i> Suppl.	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>KAR</i>	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> I/II, WVDOG 28 and 34, ed. Erich Ebeling (Leipzig/ Berlin, 1919, 1923)
<i>KBo</i>	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i> , WVDOG 1-22 (Leipzig/Berlin, 1916 ff.)
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>OHCC</i>	<i>The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture</i> , ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Recourses for Biblical Study
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SHJPLI	Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
TCL	Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre (Paris, 1910 ff.)
TZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
VA	Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
<i>WdO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft (Leipzig/ Berlin, 1900 ff.)
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
	<i>ZTK Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## Introduction

The period of forced migrations to Babylonia in the sixth century BCE was a formative one for Judean collective identity. During this time, the Neo-Babylonian empire abolished the Judean monarchy, destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple, and turned the state of Judah into one of its provinces. Every symbol of Judean identity was compromised. If Judeans were to continue to exist as a distinct community, it would have to be one that defined itself differently going forward.

The book of Ezekiel provides some insight into the process within the group forcibly removed to Babylonia in 597 BCE. Much of the text is devoted to confirming Yahweh's continued control over history and persuading the Judeans in Babylonia to uphold their side of the covenant with him. Evidently, Ezekiel's ideology was successful. The Judean community maintained a distinct group identity throughout its period of forced residence in Babylonia. When the Achaemenid empire took control of the area in 539 BCE, some Judeans chose to migrate to their perceived homeland in Judah (Ezra 1:1-5), whilst others remained as part of a venerable Judean community in Babylonia. Both communities are attributed with descendants who exist to the present day.

Scholars have long recognized the Judean forced migration or “exile” (*gôlâ*) as the rhetorical context of the book of Ezekiel. Yet the 2014 publication of cuneiform documents pertaining to the sixth- and fifth-century BCE Judean communities in Babylonia has created more detailed examination of this context in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*, CUSAS 28 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014).

Scholars feel closer than ever before to understanding Ezekiel's role in the identity formation of the forced migrant Judeans. However, those who have participated in the discussion have tended to focus on one of two things. The first approach is to emphasize Ezekiel's location in Babylonia and assert that the book is in dialogue with the foreign nations surrounding his community.<sup>2</sup> These scholars suggest that Ezekiel's main goal is to create (primarily religious) boundaries distinguishing Judeans from non-Judeans.

The alternative approach is to claim that the Babylonian setting is incidental to Ezekiel.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation usually holds that Ezekiel was fairly well-integrated into his Babylonian environment based on the recent cuneiform evidence and Ezekiel's use of Babylonian vocabulary and literary themes.<sup>4</sup> Rather than shunning foreign influence, his focus is to differentiate his forced migrant community from the Judeans who remained in Judah after 597 BCE. Ezekiel sought to achieve this by portraying the Babylonian defeat of Judah as Yahweh's punishment for the Judeans' sins, particularly the sins of those who remained. He wished to persuade his community that although their migration to Babylonia was punitive, Yahweh had spared them of a worse fate so that they could continue to exist as his covenant people (Ezek 11:14-21; 33:23-29).

---

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Rainer Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) 32; Dale F. Launderville, "The Threat of Syncretism" *WdO* 45 (2015) 49; Lydia Lee, *Mapping Judah's Fate in Ezekiel's Oracles Against the Nations* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016); C.L. Crouch, "What Makes a Thing Abominable? Observations on the Language of Boundaries and Identity Formation from a Social Scientific Perspective" *VT* 65 (2015) 534.

<sup>3</sup> Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah: Shifts of Group Identities Within Babylonian Exilic Ideology," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 146; Martti Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?" *WdO* 45 (2015) 97; David S. Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon," in *Bible et Proche-Orient, Mélanges André Lemaire*, ed. J. Elayi and M. Durand (Paris: Gabalda, 2014), 101.

<sup>4</sup> This is discussed in depth in Section 2.1.

Both of these approaches are invaluable for understanding Ezekiel's role in the identity formation of the Judeans in Babylonia. However, there are several important issues which have thus far been overlooked. The first is that Ezekiel could have sought to set his community in equally forceful contrast with more than one perceived "other." Both the foreign nations surrounding and governing his community and the Judeans remaining in Judah presented potential threats to their group identity. Ezekiel did not have to choose between them. Instead, he redefined the concept of what was foreign and applied it to all groups he saw as outsiders to his own.

Social-scientific research has demonstrated that the most effective form of identity expression (whether individual or collective) occurs through the practices of the human body. These are behaviours which individuals tend to conduct so naturally that they are largely beyond consideration. Examples include language, dialect, and accent; clothing and bodily adornment; food and eating practices; gesture; daily routine; and religious rituals. Practices such as these evoke the structure of a society and the individual's unquestioned place within it.<sup>5</sup> In the context of a significant upheaval, like a forced migration, these practices may come under scrutiny as they undergo changes.

The book of Ezekiel contains evidence of several of the above-mentioned behaviours, either in reference to members of his own community and to those outside of it, including language and dialect (Section 2.1), clothing and adornment (Sections 2.2.2, 2.3.1, and 4.2.1), food practices (Section 4.2.2), and religious rituals (Sections 2.2.4, 3.2,

---

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3.3.1, and 4.1.2). Although the text can only present Ezekiel's views about these practices and not historical evidence that they occurred, the way he mobilizes symbols of bodily identity reveals how he seeks to influence the composition and structure of his community.

Previous scholarship has not recognized the role that bodily symbols of identity expression play in Ezekiel's ideology. Without taking seriously the fact that the most effective forms of identity expression are intimately connected with the human body, scholars risk focusing only on the biblical texts as they were written and read by educated elites. In the case of Ezekiel, where elements of his ideology permeated his wider community as well as following generations, the mechanisms for this effectiveness need to be considered in more depth.

Studies on the identity formation of the Judeans in Babylonia rarely account for the diversity of the group. Even though the 597 BCE group was ostensibly made up of only the upper classes (royals, elites, military leaders, and artisans, according to 2 Kgs 24:14-16), it consisted of Judeans of different professional, gender, and age identities.<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel does not explicitly address the diversity of his audience, but he makes enough references to women to reveal intriguing aspects of their role in the forced migrant community. Additionally, he provides information about the social roles of priests and prophets through his own actions and his stipulations for the future priesthood.

---

<sup>6</sup> Women and children are not mentioned in the biblical accounts of the exile, but it is extremely likely that they accompanied the Judean men to Babylonia. The goal of the forced migrations was to repopulate and cultivate neglected parts of the Neo-Babylonian empire (Cornelia Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," in *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium BC*, ed. Angelika Berlejung and Michael Streck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 253), the former of which would have had short-lived success without the presence of women.



Without taking the above considerations into account, we risk an incomplete understanding of Ezekiel's role in the identity formation of his community. Since Ezekiel is the longest textual source relating to this period of Judean history, it follows that its interpretation is key to understanding how the Judeans in Babylonia created and maintained a distinct group identity. Therefore, this project seeks to examine all aspects of the context the book of Ezekiel is addressing in order to gain the fullest possible understanding of its ideological goals. Additionally, this project mobilizes insights from the social sciences to interpret the process as accurately as possible, especially given the limited historical evidence available.

In what follows, I show that Ezekiel's rhetoric is directed towards establishing boundaries between his community and the foreign nations surrounding it, as well as between his community and the Judeans who remained in Judah. Having discussed the relevant sources, methodology, and history of scholarship in the first chapter, I will examine in Chapter 2 how Ezekiel views the group identity of his community in relation to Babylonia and other proximate foreign nations. Next, Chapter 3 considers the place of the Judeans remaining in Judah in Ezekiel's ideology. Ezekiel counters their claims that they are the ones who have inherited the land and the covenant with Yahweh, instead presenting the forced migrants as the chosen continuation of the true Israel. Finally, I reveal how Ezekiel defines the social structure of his group in terms of hierarchies of gender and religious authority. He sees this organization as central to the success of his project: in Chapter 4, I examine Ezekiel's representations of women, priests, and prophets, and the roles he envisages them playing in his idealized community. Throughout all of the above, I demonstrate how Ezekiel communicated and strengthened

his ideology through his utilization of bodily symbols of identity.

## **Chapter One**

### **Sources, Methods, and History of Scholarship**

#### **1.1 Sources**

The book of Ezekiel serves as the main source for the present inquiry. This text has fascinated and frustrated readers for over two millennia, creating a wealth of insight and debate from which to draw. It is not possible to acknowledge all scholarly contributions here, but it is necessary to outline the main arguments concerning the date and authorship of Ezekiel before proceeding.

Although there is no historical evidence that the prophet Ezekiel ever existed, there is good reason to accept the book's stated context of the sixth-century BCE Judean forced migrations to Babylonia. Thus, the current project is also informed by other primary sources relating to that time and place. Although extra-biblical sources attesting to a Judean presence in sixth- and fifth-century BCE Babylonia are numerous, they are terse in nature. Where the book of Ezekiel waxes lyrical on theological issues but says little about, for example, the economic structure of the forced migrant community, the Babylonian texts tend to record short economic and legal transactions without explicit reference to religion, ideology, or identity. Nevertheless, the latter provide valuable insights into the socio-historic context in which the book of Ezekiel was written.

##### **1.1.1 Ezekiel the Book and Ezekiel the Prophet**

Most scholars implicitly or explicitly suggest that the prophet Ezekiel is the writer of the book bearing his name. The book's opening indicates that he provided its material (in the earthly realm, at least; Ezek 1:3). However, there is no reliable evidence that attests to

Ezekiel as an historical figure, nor that proves anyone by that name was responsible for the book. Scholars tend to make the assumption that each prophetic book of the Hebrew Bible came into being due to the activity of an historical prophet, yet there is no evidence to support even this.<sup>7</sup> The only responsible approach is to consider each book independently, weighing up the evidence for its specific historic setting, authorship, and redaction.

Although Ezekiel the prophet is undeniably the narrator of the book, this does not necessarily make him its author.<sup>8</sup> The figure of Ezekiel does not appear anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible or in any extra-biblical evidence; he can only be known as a literary construct. The book tells us that this literary figure was a priest, the son of Buzi (also unknown), and that he was displaced to Babylonia at the same time as King Jehoiachin (597 BCE; Ezek 1:1-3). His prophetic ministry ostensibly took place during the years 593-571 BCE among the Judean community in Babylonia (Ezek 1:1-2; 29:17).

In 1930, Charles Torrey was the first to suggest that this character called Ezekiel was a pseudonym for the book and never existed historically.<sup>9</sup> Other scholars posited that Ezekiel existed, but not as the book describes. For example, Alfred Bertholet suggested

---

<sup>7</sup> Matthijs de Jong, "Ezekiel as a Literary Figure and the Quest for the Historic Prophet," in *The Book of Ezekiel and its Influence*, ed. Johannes Tromp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?" 86.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Cutler Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930).

that the prophet's ministry began in Judah, whilst others had him moving back and forth between Babylonia and Judah in real life and not only in visions.<sup>10</sup>

However, little that the book says about Ezekiel's life is inconsistent with the extant evidence. First, the text itself suggests a Babylonian setting due to its detailed knowledge of Babylonian language, literary motifs, and cultural practices (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2). It also makes frequent use of language and themes that occur in the Priestly writings of the Pentateuch, suggesting its author was familiar with Judean priestly traditions (See Section 4.2).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the book of Ezekiel mentions the names of specific people who were present in Jerusalem between 597 and 587 BCE. That these names are included in the text suggests they were significant to the author and his audience.<sup>12</sup> One in particular, Jaazaniah son of Shaphan (Ezek 8:11), seems to have belonged to a prominent family of Judean officials. His father had been a state secretary under King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3-14) whilst his nephew, Gedaliah, was appointed governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (Jer 39:14; 40:5-11; 41:2; 43:6).<sup>13</sup> The name Jaazaniah son of Shaphan would likely have been recognized by most Jerusalemites of his generation. One or two generations later, it may not have carried much weight.

---

<sup>10</sup> A. Bertholet and K. Galling, *Hesekiel*, HAT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1936), xii-xiii. Andrew Mein includes a full history of this debate in *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-50.

<sup>11</sup> Menahem Haran, "The Law Code of Ezek xl-xlvi and its Relation to the Priestly School," *HUCA* 50 (1979) 45-71; "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," *VT* 58 (2008) 211-18.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret S. Odell, *Ezekiel* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2005), 119.

<sup>13</sup> Although no extra-biblical evidence attests to Jaazaniah specifically, seal impressions have been discovered that bear the names of some of his family members. (Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah Under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 84-86).

There is also evidence outside of the book of Ezekiel that supports its claims. For example, 2 Kings 24:14-17 states that Nebuchadnezzar II, ruler of the Neo-Babylonian empire, defeated Judah and forcibly removed its king, Jehoiachin, along with his family and a selection of Judean officials, soldiers, and craftsmen, to Babylonia.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that this group of Jerusalem elites would have included Temple priests, the profession attributed to the prophet Ezekiel.<sup>15</sup>

All of the above suggests that the brief narrative concerning Ezekiel's life is historically plausible.<sup>16</sup> It is much more difficult to say how much of the book bearing his name, if any, may have originated with him. The textual witnesses to the book which exist today (the Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and a very small number of Judean Desert manuscripts) represent only the latest stages of redaction and transmission.<sup>17</sup> Text criticism can sometimes reveal where changes may have occurred, and this will be discussed where relevant regarding individual passages. Yet the writing and editing of the text which took place prior to the extant sources can only be a matter of conjecture.

---

<sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar's Akkadian name was Nabû-kudurri-ûṣur ("May [the god] Nabû protect my heir"), which is more properly rendered *Nebuchadrezzar*. However, since most biblical traditions record the king's name in Hebrew as Nebuchadnezzar (נְבוּכַדְנֶצְצַר), this is the name by which he is most commonly known in the modern world and which I shall use here.

<sup>15</sup> The question of this account's accuracy is discussed in Section 1.1.2.

<sup>16</sup> The only potential exception to this claim, to my knowledge, is Ezekiel's location by the Chebar canal, which Gauthier Tolini showed was built during the Achaemenid period ("La Babylonie et l'Iran," (PhD diss., Université Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2011) 43). This issue is discussed further in Section 1.1.2.

<sup>17</sup> The earliest witness to the book of Ezekiel (except for the very fragmentary Judean Desert manuscripts and a first-century CE copy of Ezekiel 37 found at Masada) is in its Greek translation in Papyrus 967, which includes everything from Ezek 11:25 onwards. This papyrus dates to the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE and attests to several significant minuses from the Masoretic Text: Ezek 12:26-28; 32:24-26; and 36:23c-38. Additionally, it places Ezek 37 (the dried bones) after Ezek 38-39 (the battle with Gog). The one Ezekiel scroll found in Cave 11 at Qumran had been petrified and could not be unrolled (Ingrid Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel: Papyrus 967 and the Masoretic Text as Variant Literary Editions* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-2).

The minimalist view holds that the sixth-century BCE prophet Ezekiel (or a writer using his pseudonym) was responsible for only a few oracles, which others embellished and compiled into a book.<sup>18</sup> Walther Zimmerli famously separated the text of Ezekiel into multiple redactional layers, positing a prophetic core which was expanded by a contemporary “Ezekiel School.”<sup>19</sup> However, Zimmerli provided little justification for his divisions. Others who attempted similar projects did not find many areas of agreement, either with Zimmerli or with one another.<sup>20</sup> The lack of clear evidence for distinguishing primary material from secondary in the book of Ezekiel led other commentators to take a synchronic approach. Moshe Greenberg in particular advocated studying the book as it stands in the extant textual witnesses.<sup>21</sup>

Today, most scholars take the view that at least the bulk of the book of Ezekiel was written during the sixth-century BCE Babylonian forced migration.<sup>22</sup> There is nothing in the book which strongly recommends an alternative historical context. Additionally, commentators have noted how the text contains a coherent message and clear structure

---

<sup>18</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, trans. Ronald E. Clements (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 48-49.

<sup>21</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983); *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). Andrew Mein points out that Greenberg does not explain why this careful patterning could not be the work of a redactor rather than the original writer (Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 49-50).

<sup>22</sup> Though it should be noted that some German scholars do not agree with this consensus and continue the pursuit of distinguishing Ezekiel’s “original” material from that of later redactors, e.g. Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, “Ezekiel: New Directions and Current Debates,” in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, FAT 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 3-17.

throughout: Chapters 1-24 reflect on Judah's defeat; Chapters 25-32 are oracles against other nations; and Chapters 33-48 describe the restoration of a new Judean community.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that even though the sixth century BCE proves a likely context for both the book and the author it describes, this does not amount to evidence that the prophet Ezekiel existed, nor that he wrote the book that bears his name. In what follows, I refer to the writer or writers of the book as "Ezekiel" or "he," as is customary in Ezekiel scholarship. I do so in recognition of the fact that the author or school which compiled the text used this name and persona, whether or not it was their own. The prophet Ezekiel as an actor who drives the textual narrative, even if based on an historical figure, remains accessible only as a literary construct.

### **1.1.2 Judeans in Babylonia: The Evidence**

By contrast to the prophet Ezekiel, the Judean forced migrant community in Babylonia is somewhat accessible via extra-biblical sources. This is fortunate, because the biblical accounts of the exile are far from consistent in their details. For example, 2 Kings 24:14-16 claims that thousands of Judeans were displaced to Babylonia in 597 BCE, leaving nobody in Judah except the poorest of the land (2 Kgs 24:14). Yet according to the following chapter (2 Kgs 25:11, 18-19), when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE there was still a "multitude" left in the city, including King Zedekiah and his officials and priests. Even after the displacement a few months later, Gedaliah remained in Judah as governor along with certain officials, soldiers, and priests (including Jeremiah) until he was assassinated in 582 BCE (2 Kgs 25:22-26; Jer 40:6-12).

---

<sup>23</sup> de Jong, "Ezekiel as a Literary Figure," 2-3.



The extent of the forced migration is even more difficult to determine. 2 Kings 24:14 states that 10,000 Jerusalemites, officials, and military personnel were displaced in 597 BCE, whilst 24:16 lists 7000 military personnel and 1000 craftsmen and metalsmiths, all of whom were “men of battle” (*gibbôrîm ‘ōšê milhāmâ*<sup>24</sup>). It is not clear whether these numbers represented two groups adding up to 18,000, or a single group of 8000-10,000 men.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Jeremiah 52:28 puts the number of Jerusalemites displaced in 597 BCE at 3023.

The accounts in 2 Kings 25:11 and 2 Chronicles 39:20 claim that the remainder of the city’s population was removed in 587 BCE, whilst Jeremiah 52:29-30 states that it was only 832 people, with an additional displacement of 745 people in 582 BCE (amounting to 4600 total forced migrants).<sup>26</sup> 2 Kings 25:26 has “all the people, from small to great” (*kol-hā ‘ām miqqātôn wě ‘ad-gādól*) fleeing Judah for Egypt after Gedaliah’s assassination in 582 BCE. Jeremiah 43:5-7 likewise states that everyone whom the Babylonians had left in Judah fled to Egypt at that point. The one fact that the biblical sources seem to agree upon is that no Judeans lived in Judah after 582 BCE.

Archaeological excavations of sixth-century BCE Judah have revealed that this was not the case. Based on his findings, Amihai Mazar suggested there was evidence for

---

<sup>24</sup> All transliterations and translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>25</sup> The fact that these forced migrants are specified as being men suggests that if women and children accompanied them, the group would have been even larger.

<sup>26</sup> The exact date of the second forced migration in particular is unclear. Conflicting accounts in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. 2 Kgs 25:8 and Jer 52:12 compared to Jer 52:29) and the difficulty of synchronising the reigns of Judean and Babylonian rulers mean that it could have occurred in either 587 or 586 BCE. After considering all the possible configurations, Rainer Albertz makes a compelling argument for the second deportation occurring in August 587 BCE, which is the date the current project will use (Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2003), 78-81.

continuity in population and agricultural production in all areas outside of Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup>

These discoveries led several scholars to claim that the significance of the Judean exile to Babylonia had been greatly exaggerated by the biblical accounts or was even largely a myth.<sup>28</sup>

However, more recent study has shown that the archaeological continuity in sixth-century BCE Judah is largely limited to the area of Benjamin, where Mizpah is located.<sup>29</sup>

This supports the biblical accounts, which state that Mizpah became the new administrative capital once Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kgs 25:23; Jer 40:6-12).

Elsewhere in Judah, there seems to have been considerable population decline.<sup>30</sup> The exact extent of this decline is still debated, with scholars placing it anywhere between 25% and 60% of the pre-597 BCE population.<sup>31</sup> Although some of this population may have been lost in battle or the related effects of warfare (famine and illness), some went to Babylonia as the biblical accounts describe.

---

<sup>27</sup> Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 BCE* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 549.

<sup>28</sup> The most extreme of these views was represented by Torrey (*Pseudo-Ezekiel*). Others preferred to emphasize the continuity in 6th century BCE Judah (e.g. Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the "Exilic" Period* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996); "The City State of Jerusalem in the Neo-Babylonian Empire: Evidence from the Surrounding States," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 34-48) or the rhetorical power of the exilic motif due to Israel's various "exiles" throughout history (e.g. Robert P. Carroll, "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora," in *Leading Captivity Captive: "The Exile" as History and Ideology*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 62-79).

<sup>29</sup> Bustenay Oded, "Where is the 'Myth of the Empty Land' to be Found?" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003); Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 152-53.

<sup>30</sup> Avraham Faust, "Judah in the Sixth Century BCE: A Rural Perspective," *PEQ* 135/1 (2003) 37-53 (45-46).

<sup>31</sup> Such estimates attempt to account for population lost due to war, famine, and migration in addition to the forced migrations to Babylonia (Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 88-90; "More and Less Than a Myth," 23-24).

Documents from the Neo-Babylonian empire attest to Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Judah and the subsequent presence of Judeans in Babylonia. The majority of these texts are written in cuneiform script on clay tablets in the Late Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, the administrative language of the Neo-Babylonian empire.<sup>32</sup> Their value for studying the Judean forced migrant communities will be discussed in what follows.

### *The Babylonian Chronicle*

The Babylonian Chronicle is a concise record of what the Neo-Babylonian administration considered to be the key events of each king's reign. Only the 597 BCE defeat of Jerusalem is mentioned:

Year seven: In the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his army and went to Hattu. He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city; he captured the king. He appointed a king of his choice in [the city]. He raised a heavy tribute and carried it to Babylon.<sup>33</sup>

There is no mention of the population of Jerusalem being displaced, but the sources outlined below demonstrate that this was the case. The Babylonian Chronicle only mentions that the king of Judah was captured, and a new king installed in his place. According to 2 Kings 24, the captured king was Jehoiachin and the new king under

---

<sup>32</sup> There is evidence that the Aramaic language and script were also used for keeping official records in the Neo-Babylonian empire. However, since Aramaic was written with ink on scrolls of parchment which were liable to decompose, unlike the clay tablets on which Akkadian was inscribed, these documents are not as well represented. The majority of the evidence for the use of Aramaic during the Neo-Babylonian period consists of Aramaic epigraphs inscribed in the margins of Akkadian texts on clay tablets, and Aramaic personal names on around 100 bricks found in Babylon. (Yigal Bloch, *Alphabet Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform: Sēpiru Professionals in Mesopotamia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018], 9, 14-16).

<sup>33</sup> MU VII<sup>kām</sup> <sup>iti</sup> *Kislīmu šār Akkadī<sup>ki</sup> umummāni<sup>me</sup>-šū id-ke-ma a-na<sup>kur</sup> Hat-tú illik-ma ina [muḥḥi] āl Ia-a-ḥu-du iddi-ma ina<sup>iti</sup> Addari UD II<sup>kām</sup> āla iṣ-ša-bat šarra ik-ta-šad šarra šā [libbi]-šū ina lib-bi ip-te-qid bi-lat-sa kabittu(dugud)<sup>tū</sup> il-[qa-am-m]a ana Bābīlī<sup>ki</sup> ultērib<sup>[ib]</sup> BM 22047 r. 11-13. A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 102.*

Babylonian vassalage was Zedekiah, his uncle (2 Kgs 24:14, 17). Textual evidence discovered in Babylon supports the claim that Jehoiachin was held there.

### *The Weidner Ration Lists*

The last four verses of the book of 2 Kings report that in the 37<sup>th</sup> year of King Jehoiachin's exile, he was released from prison, seated above all the other kings held in Babylon, and allowed to dine with the Babylonian king every day (2 Kgs 25:27-30). There is no external evidence proving this was the case, but there may be some truth to the final line at least: "And as for [Jehoiachin's] allowance, a continual allowance was given to him from the king: a daily portion each day, all the days of his life."

Evidence of this allowance appears in the Weidner Ration Lists, named for their original translator. These cuneiform tablets detail the ingoing and outgoing products of the Neo-Babylonian royal court. They were found by the German excavators of the South Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon and date to ca. 595 – 570 BCE.<sup>34</sup> Four of the texts mention the distribution of oil to "Jehoiachin, king of the land of Judah" (<sup>l</sup>*ia-’u-DU šarri šá* <sup>mât</sup>*ia-a-ḫu-du*) and three of them also list the "sons of the king of Judah" (*mârē*<sup>meš</sup> <sup>mât</sup>*ia-a-ḫu-du*) as recipients (either Jehoiachin's brothers or his sons).<sup>35</sup>

The Weidner Ration Lists mention many other foreign names (Philistine, Phoenician, Elamite, Median, Persian, and Egyptian) in the same context as Jehoiachin's. This suggests that the Babylonians did not treat the Judean king differently from their other

---

<sup>34</sup> Ernst F. Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda, in Babylonischen Keilschrifttexten," in *Mélanges Syriens Offerts a Monsieur René Dussaud*, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1939), 924.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 924-27.

high-status prisoners of war, despite what 2 Kings 25:28 claims.<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, the provision of an allowance indicates that Jehoiachin and the other deposed rulers were treated well in captivity. On the other, the tablets also attest to the prisoners' strict confinement, perhaps even in the South Palace itself.<sup>37</sup>

### *Babylonian Administrative Documents*

Even though it is not mentioned in the Chronicle, the Neo-Babylonian imperial policy of displacing defeated populations is well-attested in contemporary texts. It appears to have been conducted on a smaller scale than the Neo-Assyrian displacements and undertaken for pragmatic reasons that went beyond the punishment of rebellious vassal states.<sup>38</sup> The Weidner Ration Lists only provide information about the most elite members of the forced migrant populations. The majority of the Judeans and other displaced peoples appear to have been settled not in the city of Babylon but more rurally, near Nippur (see Fig. 1). Babylonian administrative documents attest to many foreign peoples conducting forced labour on infrastructure projects around Nippur during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Some of their settlements are named after the places they came from, including Bīt-Šurraya for Tyre and Iškullunu for Ashkelon.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 927-28.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 927.

<sup>38</sup> David Stephen Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 110-112; John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 32-33.

<sup>39</sup> D.J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 76-78. There is even evidence of Syrians who were forced to migrate from their city of Neirab to the Nippur region in the 6th century BCE and then returned to Syria in the 5th century BCE. The documents pertaining to the Nusku-gabbē family were found in Neirab, having been brought there when the family returned to their perceived homeland. Their names suggest that the family continued to worship the Syrian god Šin (known

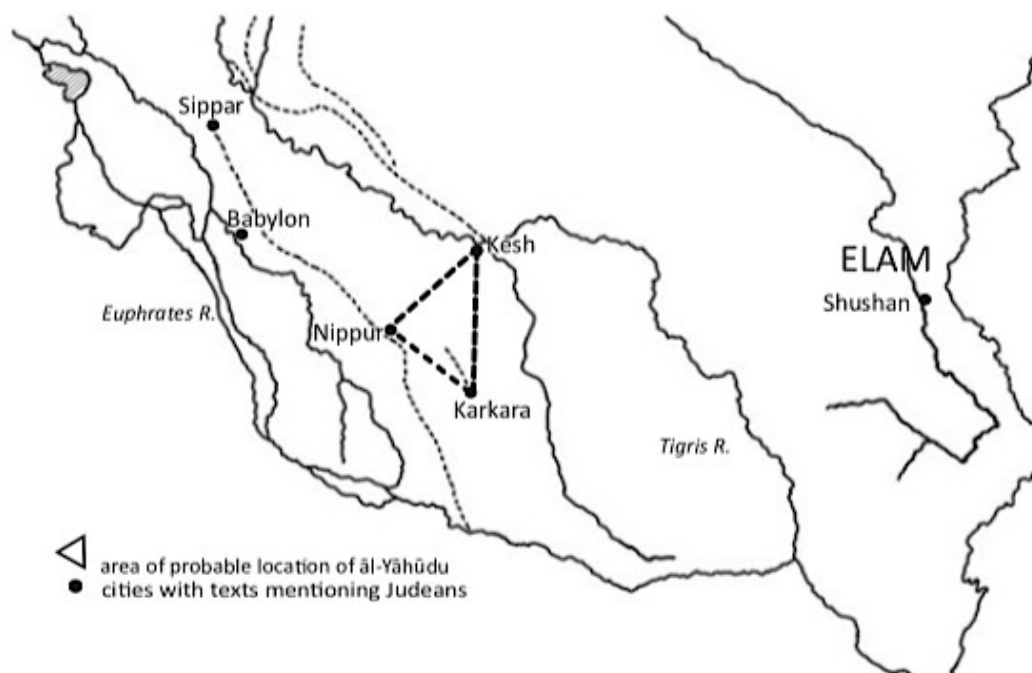


Fig. 1 Map showing locations of cuneiform documents relating to Judeans.<sup>40</sup>

Ran Zadok conducted several studies of the onomastica in these texts. He was mostly able to identify Judeans, with some caution, by Yahwistic elements in their names.<sup>41</sup> Neo-Babylonian administrative texts rarely attribute ethnic designations to foreign names, meaning that scholars have to determine the ethnicities of the individuals mentioned

---

as Nusku by Northwest Semitic speakers) whilst in Babylonia (Laurie E. Pearce, “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: An Overview,” *Religion Compass* 10/9 (2016), 236).

<sup>40</sup> Pearce, “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia,” 236.

<sup>41</sup> Certain individuals with non-Yahwistic names could be identified as Judean based on their genealogical connection with people who did have Yahwistic names. Some names that were characteristically Hebrew and Canaanite have also been included in Zadok’s study. Zadok notes that not all Judeans could be identified because some undoubtedly had names that did not make their ethnic identity evident. (Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods*, 7-34). Cf. Laurie Pearce, “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: An Overview,” *Religion Compass* 10/9 (2016) 230-243 (232).

based on the languages and theophoric elements featured in the names.<sup>42</sup> The Judeans seem to have comprised a very small minority of the inhabitants of Babylonia, but they were definitely present. Some of them were even employed as royal officials, suggesting that it was possible for them to achieve relatively high status in the Neo-Babylonian administration.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Murašû Archive*

Another important source from the Nippur area is the Murašû Archive: a collection of documents named after the patriarch of a successful Babylonian family business.<sup>44</sup> The archive, discovered in 1893 during the American excavations of Nippur, contains over 700 tablets and fragments of tablets, mostly in cuneiform but with a few Aramaic addenda. They date to ca. 454 – 404 BCE, during the period of Achaemenid control over Babylonia and over a century after the Judean forced migrations.<sup>45</sup>

These tablets shed light on the socio-economic context of mid-first millennium BCE southern Babylonia. Until more recent publications (discussed below), they were the

---

<sup>42</sup> Ran Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods*, SHJPLI 3 (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1979) 2-4.

<sup>43</sup> Ran Zadok, “The Representation of Foreigners in Neo- and Late-Babylonian Legal Document (Eighth Through Second Centuries BCE),” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 471-589 (486). Pearce notes that one royal official whose name is Yāhû-šar-ušur (“O Yahweh, protect the king!”) is also referred to as Bēl-šar-ušur (“O Bēl, protect the king!”) in CUSAS 28: 2, 3, 4. This suggests that foreigners could adopt Babylonian *Beamtennamen*, rendering their ethnic origins invisible in the onomastic record (Pearce, “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia,” 234).

<sup>44</sup> H.V. Hilprecht and A.T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashû Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC)*, BE 9 (Philadelphia, 1898), 13-16; Matthew W. Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire: The Murašû Archive, the Murašû Firm, and Persian Rule in Babylonia* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1985), 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 14.

primary witnesses to the Judean communities in the Nippur area. Although only about 3% of the names mentioned in the Murašû Archive are Judean, they document the fact that Judeans were involved in the same economic practices as the other people groups around them.<sup>46</sup> These practices mostly involved the “bow-lands” (É GIŠ.BAN = *bīt qašti*) belonging to the crown, which were granted to individuals in exchange for military service or, more frequently by that time, equivalent payment, as well as an annual tax.<sup>47</sup> Firms like Murašû’s could act as middlemen, helping people sublet their bow-lands along with the attendant livestock, equipment, and seed, and providing loans to landholders with the land as the pledge.<sup>48</sup> The presence of Judean names in this company’s records reveals that at least some Judeans were involved in agricultural work in the area outside Nippur during the Persian period. Later text publications confirmed that this had been the situation for some time preceding the existence of the Murašû firm.

### *Sippar Texts*

Six texts from an archive discovered in the northern Babylonian city of Sippar attest to the Judean family of Ariḫ’s mercantile activities from 546 BCE to 544 BCE. Some of the family members have Babylonian names, possibly as early as the generation born in the 590s – 570s BCE, which could suggest their quick adaptation to Babylonian society.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, one of the Judean daughters, Kaššāya, marries into a Babylonian elite

---

<sup>46</sup> Ran Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia*, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> Yigal Bloch, “Judeans in Sippar and Susa during the First Century of the Babylonian Exile: Assimilation and Perseverance under Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Rule,” *JANEH* 1 (2014), 119–172 (130).



family, which some interpret as evidence for the Judeans' assimilation at the highest level.<sup>50</sup> Yigal Bloch suggests that some of the family's designation as professional merchant (*tamkāru*) may have driven their desire to gain the trust of their Babylonian colleagues and neighbours. Yet he also notes that their path to assimilation may not have been completely smooth: two drafts of Kaššāya's marriage contract have been discovered, the second without some of the Babylonian family members as witnesses, who appear in the first.<sup>51</sup> The most recently published corpus of texts relating to the Judeans in Babylonia provides more detailed information about their relationship with their neighbours.

#### *CUSAS 28*

Laurie Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch's 2014 publication of *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* (CUSAS 28) has vastly improved knowledge of the Judean communities in Babylonia during the earlier years of their displacement. The volume contains 103 cuneiform documents dating to ca. 572 – 477 BCE.<sup>52</sup> Some of these texts could refer to members of the same generation of

---

<sup>50</sup> BM 65149, originally published in Martha Roth, *Babylonian Marriage Agreements: 7th-3rd Centuries B.C.* AOAT 222 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 92-95; Pearce, "Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia," 234.

<sup>51</sup> Bloch, "Judeans in Sippar and Susa," 132. There is also some debate about what the small size of Kaššāya's dowry might indicate. A small dowry could be due to the family's lack of wealth, as one might expect, but it was also possible that the social network that came with a family of royal merchants would have been worth enough to the groom's family that they did not require much more (Tero Alstola, "Judean Merchants in Babylonia and Their Participation in Long-Distance Trade," *WdO* 47/1 (2017), 25-51 (35); "Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2018), 77-78; cf. Kathleen Abraham, "West Semitic and Judean Brides in Cuneiform Sources from the Sixth Century BCE: New Evidence from a Marriage Contract from Āl-Yahūdu" *AfO* 51 [2005/2006], 198-219 [211]).

<sup>52</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia*, 4.

Judean forced migrants that Ezekiel addresses, making them invaluable for studying the book in its socio-historical context. Although the tablets are unprovenanced, there is no doubt concerning their authenticity.<sup>53</sup>

The texts published to date reveal significant information about forced migrant communities in a rural part of the Neo-Babylonian empire. They can be divided into three groups, now known as āl-Yāhūdu, bīt-Našar, and bīt-Abī-rām. Āl-Yāhūdu (or āl-Yāhūdāia) was a settlement which seems to have been populated entirely by Judeans. Indeed, the name given to āl-Yāhūdu (“Judah-town”) suggests that ethnic enclaves were consciously created and named after their inhabitants’ place of origin.<sup>54</sup> The texts reveal that the āl-Yāhūdu population had contact with the nearby Bīt-Našar (“the house of Našar [eagle]”) settlement, but only a few Judeans appear to have lived there.<sup>55</sup> The bīt-Abī-rām (“house/ estate of Abī-rām”) texts focus on the steward of the nearby crown prince’s

---

<sup>53</sup> Caroline Waerzeggers, Review of *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*, by Laurie Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Strata* 33 (2015), 182. These tablets are part of a larger collection, the rest of which is yet to be published (Cornelia Wunsch, *Judeans by the Waters of Babylon. New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia* BaAR 6 [Dresden: ISLET, forthcoming]). The risks and legal issues surrounding unprovenanced artefacts are outlined in Simon Mackenzie, “Dig a Bit Deeper: Law, Regulation and the Illicit Antiquities Market,” in *Art, Cultural Heritage, and the Law: Cases and Materials*, Third Edition, ed. Patty Gerstenblith (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2012), 632-43.

<sup>54</sup> Like Bīt-Šurraya and Išqillunu mentioned above and in Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 76-78. Āl-Yāhūdu was already known from one administrative text from this site published by Joannès and Lemaire in 1999 (“Trois tablettes cunéiformes à l’onomastique oust-sémitique,” *Transeuphratène* 17 (1999) 17-34); cf. Laurie Pearce, “Judean: A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 271. I. Eph’al (“The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th-5th Centuries BC: Maintenance and Cohesion,” *Orientalia NS* 47 (1978), 80-81) notes examples of other such enclaves mentioned in the Murašû texts and all located in the Nippur area. These include forced migrant communities from Asia Minor, Phoenicia, Syria, Philistia, Egypt, and Arabia, with toponyms reflecting their place of origin. Some of these toponyms appear in documents from the Neo-Babylonian period, and since Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in all these areas (except Egypt, whose forced migrants were probably brought to Mesopotamia during the Neo-Assyrian period) it is likely that their inhabitants were displaced to Babylonia during his reign.

<sup>55</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia*, 6.

estate; no Judeans are attested there.<sup>56</sup> Several Judeans are mentioned in other locations in the same area, including one named after its Judean head-man, Ṭūb-Yāma (Tobiah).<sup>57</sup> Since the provenances of the CUSAS 28 tablets are unknown, their exact place of origin can only be an approximation. The transactions they record mention cities which appear to be nearby, including Nippur, Karkara, and Keš. This has led Pearce and Wunsch to conclude that the Judean communities attested were located east and southeast of Babylon, beyond Nippur, near the areas in the purview of the Murašû Archive.<sup>58</sup>

Based on what is known of that area during the Neo-Babylonian period, the discovery is not surprising. The Nippur-Karkara-Keš region had suffered a decline during the eighth- and seventh-century BCE Neo-Assyrian and Elamite battles, becoming a last bastion of Assyrian control as the Neo-Babylonian empire spread across Mesopotamia.<sup>59</sup> Once Nebuchadnezzar II had seized the area from the Assyrians, he sought to revitalize its land in order to make it a productive part of his empire. Large-scale irrigation projects took place around Nippur to make the land fertile and corvée labour was a convenient way to complete these. It is logical to posit that Judeans and other forced migrants would have been settled in the area to work on the canals and then farm the newly-arable land.<sup>60</sup>

The significance of water systems is attested in Ezekiel 1:1 (also 1:3; 3:15, 23;

---

<sup>56</sup> Pearce, “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia,” 236.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Wunsch, “Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” 253. Nippur as a city went through a significant population decline during the Neo-Babylonian period (McGuire Gibson, “Patterns of Occupation at Nippur,” in *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers Read at the 35th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. Maria deJong Ellis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1992), 41).

<sup>60</sup> Wunsch, “Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia,” 253; John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 65.

10:15, 20, 22; 43:3), when the prophet is said to be located “among the exiles by the Chebar river/canal” (*bētôk-haggôlâ ‘al-nēhar-kebār*). The first translators of the Murašû documents, Hermann Hilprecht and Albert Clay, identified the *Nār Kabari* (Kabar river/canal) mentioned in that corpus with the Chebar canal in Ezekiel.<sup>61</sup> Two of the Murašû texts mention the canal (BE 9, 4 and BE 9, 84), making it clear it passed through Nippur and was used for the transportation of goods.<sup>62</sup>

Caroline Waerzeggars has shown that the *Nār Kabari* was the primary commercial travel route from Babylon to Susa, passing through several cities on its way, including Nippur (see Fig. 2 for geographical context).<sup>63</sup> This means it is possible that the Judean communities near Nippur are the ones featured in the book of Ezekiel, or at least are in the same region. The only difficulty with this interpretation is that the earliest attestation of the *Nār Kabari* dates to the reign of Cambyses. Gauthier Tolini has argued convincingly that the excavation of the Kabar canal began in the second year of Cambyses’ reign as part of a vast water network that Cyrus and Cambyses sought to

---

<sup>61</sup> Hilprecht and Clay, *Business Documents of Murashû Sons of Nippur*, 28.

<sup>62</sup> BE 9,4, dated to the 22nd year of Artaxerxes I (443 BCE), states:

(1) 60 gur suluppu ša <sup>md</sup>Bêl-nâdin-šumu aplu ša (2) <sup>m</sup>mu-ra-šû-û ina muḥ-ḥi <sup>m</sup>Itti-<sup>d</sup>Bêl-ab-nu <sup>h</sup>gal-la (3) ša <sup>m</sup>Ar-ta-aḥ-ša-ar ina <sup>arḥu</sup>Kislîmu ša šattu 22<sup>kan</sup> (4) <sup>m</sup>Ar-taḥ-ša-as-su šarru suluppu mâ (A-AN) (5) 60 gur ina <sup>isu</sup>ma-ši-ḥu ša 1 pi 1 qa (6) ina <sup>alu</sup>Šu-ša-nu i-nam-dîn a-na a-dan-ni-šu (7) suluppu mâ 60 gur la id-dan-nu ina <sup>arḥu</sup>Šabātu (8) ša šattu 22<sup>kan</sup> 120 gur suluppu <sup>[eli nâ]ru</sup>Ka-ba-ru i-nam-dîn.

“60 gur of dates due from Itti-Bêl-abnu, salve of Artaḥšar, to Bêl-nâdin-šumu, son of Murašû. In the month of Kislev of the 22nd year of King Artaxerxes he shall give the dates, that is, 60 gur, in Susa according to the measure of 1 pi 1 qa (i.e. 37 litres). If at that time he shall not have delivered the dates, i.e. 60 gur, he shall give 120 gur of dates at the canal Kabaru in the month of Šabātu of the 22nd year.”

Cf. Tolini, “La Babylonie et l’Iran,” 492-93, 497.

<sup>63</sup> Caroline Waerzeggars, “Babylonians in Susa: The Travels of Babylonian Businessmen to Susa Reconsidered,” in *Der Achämenidhof*, ed. B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 804; Tolini, “La Babylonie et l’Iran,” 491.

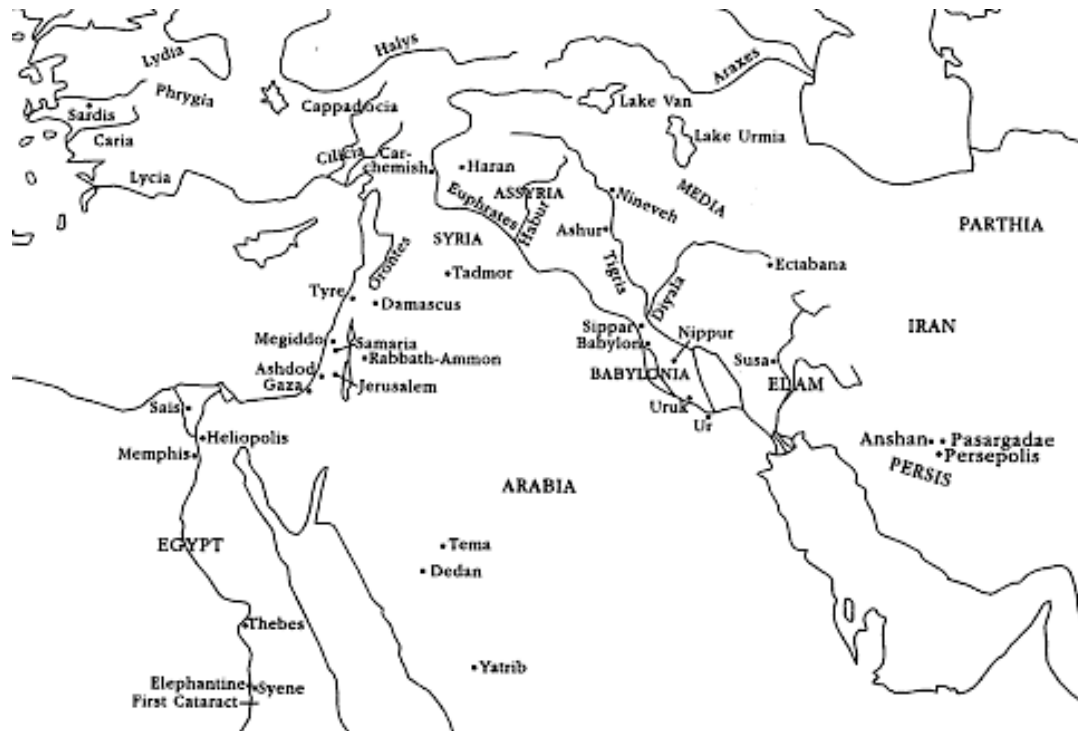


Fig. 2 Map of the ancient Near East in the sixth century BCE.<sup>64</sup>

establish in the new Persian province of Babylonia.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Ezekiel's generation of forced migrants probably did not know of the Kabar/Chebar canal. The geographic identifier must have been added by a later redactor to locate the Judean community by the well-known waterway in the vicinity of Nippur. The *Nār Kabari* was not merely an irrigation canal designed to facilitate farming: it was a major trade route. Its Achaemenid origin does not undermine the suggestion that the Judean migrants were undertaking projects to irrigate the barren lands around Nippur several decades earlier.

There is certainly evidence that they farmed those lands: the CUSAS 28 documents

<sup>64</sup> Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, xxii.

<sup>65</sup> Tolini, "La Babylonie et l'Iran," 43, 497.

reveal that Judeans received bow-lands from the Babylonian government as soon as anyone else did, probably once the necessary irrigation systems had been put in place.<sup>66</sup> This fits with the information provided by the Murašû Archive, indicating that Judeans had been farming bow-lands for about a hundred years by the time the Murašû firm was operating.<sup>67</sup> The CUSAS 28 documents show that the Judeans primarily farmed grain in rural areas and dates in more urban locations, since the latter require less space.<sup>68</sup> Their tenure of the land made them eligible for military duties or corvée labour, and they also had to pay tax on their produce at the standard rate of 20%.<sup>69</sup> The records reveal the innovative strategies the Judeans employed to make the most of their land, including cattle breeding, joint ownership of plough teams, and leasing spare land.<sup>70</sup>

Over time, these practices allowed some families to become increasingly wealthy.<sup>71</sup> Some individuals were even employed by the state as village headmen or foremen for the corvées. Others were less successful, meaning that the community became stratified as time went on.<sup>72</sup> The bow-lands often had to be divided among a family's descendants,

---

<sup>66</sup> Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," 153.

<sup>67</sup> The earliest extant evidence for a Judean being granted a bow-land dates to 569 BCE (Laurie Pearce, "Continuity and Normality in Sources Relating to the Judean Exile," HeBAI 3 (2014), 174.

<sup>68</sup> Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," 254.

<sup>69</sup> The Judeans were designated <sup>lū</sup>*šušānû*, a class of state dependant. (Pearce, "Judean: A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia," 271).

<sup>70</sup> Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," 255.

<sup>71</sup> There is evidence from as early as the eighth year of Nabonidus (548 BCE) that some Judeans in Babylonia even owned slaves (F. Rachel Magdalene and Cornelia Wunsch, "Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience," in *Slaves and Households in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Laura Culbertson [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011], 113-34 [120-21]).

<sup>72</sup> Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," 254.

becoming too small to support each new family as generations went on. There is also evidence to suggest that the tax increased when the Achaemenid empire took control of the area. These factors may well have played a significant role in some of the Judeans' decision to return to Judah when Cyrus permitted it in 539 BCE. Yet the records show that many chose to stay in Babylonia well beyond this date, suggesting they were content with their lives there.<sup>73</sup>

The tenure of bow-lands brought the Judean exiles into regular contact with the local Babylonian administration. All of the records in CUSAS 28 are written by scribes with Babylonian names, and comply with the intricate Neo-Babylonian legal system.<sup>74</sup> Some of the tablets were written in Babylon itself, showing that Judeans could travel to the capital on business or for juridical matters.<sup>75</sup> This has led Pearce and Wunsch to conclude that these documents amount to evidence that the Judean forced migrants were fully integrated into the Babylonian economic, legal, and administrative systems within decades of the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>76</sup>

However, integration into the institutions of the state does not necessarily entail equality, as Pearce and Wunsch recognize.<sup>77</sup> Pearce writes:

The available evidence does not demonstrate that [the Judeans] achieved wealth and rank commensurate with that of their Babylonian entrepreneurial counterparts. Their individual challenges, reflected in those texts in which Judean entrepreneurs granted their land as pledges to their Babylonian counterparts, reflect the downside potential

---

<sup>73</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of the Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia*, 5.

<sup>74</sup> Wunsch, "Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," 252.

<sup>75</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of the Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

of the system.<sup>78</sup>

Additionally, these often-brief administrative records do not reveal much about how the displaced Judeans perceived and constructed their group identity. There is no mention of religious practices or any cultural traditions outside of the realms of law and economics.<sup>79</sup> It is also important to consider that the earliest document dates to 572 BCE, just one year before Ezekiel's ministry ostensibly ended. Only fourteen of the texts date to the Neo-Babylonian period at all, with the vast majority belonging to the Achaemenid period. Therefore, the information the CUSAS 28 documents provide does not directly map onto the context of the first twenty-five years of the Judean forced migrations: the years during which Ezekiel claims to have prophesied.

The texts do, however, provide important socio-historical context in which to examine the book of Ezekiel. For example, it is significant that despite their apparent integration into Babylonian social systems, a sizeable number of Judeans lived in ethnic enclaves for generations. Furthermore, these enclaves were not in Babylon or any of the major Babylonian cities, but the hinterlands of Nippur. Nebuchadnezzar did not carry out any major building projects in Nippur during his reign, most likely in bitter recognition of its allegiance to Assyria during the Assyro-Babylonian wars. The area's backwater status is further supported by the continuation of Judean documentation without change when the Achaemenid empire seized control of Babylonia, suggesting that the shift in imperial control barely affected this community.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, their integration may have been

---

<sup>78</sup> Pearce, "Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia," 235.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>80</sup> Pearce, "Continuity and Normality in Sources Relating to the Judean Exile," 173.



more limited than it might at first appear.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The purpose of the current project is to determine how Ezekiel sought to influence the collective identity of his community of Judeans in Babylonia. His ideology held that his group had a distinct identity from both the foreign nations surrounding them and the Judeans remaining in Judah. The term “collective identity” is more appropriate than “ethnic identity” because both Ezekiel’s community and those who remained in Judah continued to identify themselves ethnically as Judeans (although Ezekiel wished to undermine this ethnic link, as discussed in Section 3.1). Additionally, Ezekiel’s community was made up of individuals who had a variety of social identities based on their class, profession, gender, and age. Although a shared ethnic identity united them, the influence of these social identities should also be acknowledged.

Studies of collective identities undertaken by anthropologists and archaeologists have revealed the important role of materiality in the way individuals express their identity with an ethnic or social group. Identities are constantly expressed and reinforced through material practices, especially those most intimately connected to the human body. The ways in which Ezekiel mobilized such bodily symbols of collective identities to reinforce his ideology have not been considered, in part because biblical scholarship has been slow to acknowledge the nature of the body as a socially-constructed project. Yet the book of Ezekiel is an ideal text for an enquiry like this. Its origin during a period of forced migrations means that social practices which were previously taken for granted

by the forced migrants were called into question by a new level of contact with foreigners as well as a new material setting.

### **1.2.1 Collective Identities**

The term “identity” can refer to so many things that it is almost meaningless by itself. The type of identity with which the present project is primarily concerned is usually called group or collective identity. Both refer to the ways in which any group of people defines itself and is defined by others based on the selection of certain unifying criteria. Groups can be made up of people joined together by their nation, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, class, age, profession, or any other common factor. Yet a group identity is not simply comprised of several qualities which make members similar to one another.<sup>81</sup> It consists of a sense of belonging and a shared perception of which qualities distinguish insiders from outsiders.<sup>82</sup>

Every individual has multiple group identities because they are part of multiple groups; these identities tend to complement each other if they are part of the same societal structure. For example, the division of gender roles is often specific to an ethnic group or groups. When there is a large societal change, such as a forced migration, social identities like gender can come into conflict with ethnic identities as groups attempt to reconfigure themselves in the new context.

---

<sup>81</sup> William S. Campbell, “Identity,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology*, Volume I, ed. Samuel Balentine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 503-506 (504).

<sup>82</sup> Diaz-Andreu and Lucy, “Introduction,” 1.

## *Ethnic Identity*

The Judeans in Babylonia were united by their ethnic identity as Judeans: the primary factor that distinguished them from the people groups around them. For over half a century, there has been a great deal of scholarly discussion about the concept of ethnicity in general, as well as how it applies to the ancient Israelites and Judeans in particular. As Erich Gruen has pointed out, there is no term for “ethnicity” in the ancient world. Whilst it can be informative to apply the concept of ethnic identity to ancient peoples, scholars must be aware of the heuristic nature of the definitions they utilize.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the ancient concept of ethnicity that Gruen identifies based on the extant sources is similar to the concept of ethnicity which the majority of scholars have settled on today. According to Gruen, ancient understandings of ethnicity went beyond racial thinking, involving “a complex self-perception that incorporated multiple mixtures and plural identities... Greeks, Romans, and even Jews imagined multiple lineages, intertwined ancestry, and compound kinships.”<sup>84</sup>

A claim to a shared genetic relationship between members is nearly always a defining feature of an ethnic group.<sup>85</sup> Most often, these genetic relationships are “as imagined as they are real.”<sup>86</sup> Whilst there may be some factual biological connection

---

<sup>83</sup> Erich Gruen, “Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity? A Preliminary Probe,” *Phoenix* 67/1-2 (2013) 1-22 (1-2). Terms that come close, such as “ethnos” in ancient Greek, were not used consistently to refer to one type or size of group.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>86</sup> C.L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 85. Cf. Sam Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu (London: Routledge, 2005), 86-109 (86); Erich Gruen, “Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity?” 2-3; Karmela Liebkind et al., “Acculturation and Identity,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, Second Ed., ed. David L. Sam and John W. Berry (Cambridge:

between group members, it is usually less important than their concept of shared ancestry and group history. It is the importance attributed to these factors, both by insiders and by outsiders, that defines the ethnic group.<sup>87</sup> In the case of the ancient Israelites and Judeans, the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis attest to their concept of shared ancestry as well as relationships of varying closeness to neighbouring peoples.<sup>88</sup>

The socially constructed nature of belief in shared ancestry means that it is always subject to reinterpretation and change, especially in changing socio-historical circumstances. Ethnic categories need to be valued and reinforced by those inside or outside the group, meaning they are not entirely fixed but can evolve over time.<sup>89</sup> In his influential 1969 study, the social anthropologist Fredrik Barth showed that an ethnic group is best comprehended via the boundaries it creates between insiders and outsiders.

---

Cambridge University Press, 2016), 30-49 (35). There is a debate among social scientists about how ethnic ideologies arise. Whilst primordialists hold that the belief in the significance of shared ancestry is a natural extension of real kinship, instrumentalists believe it is an ideological tool which can be wielded to further political and economic interests. Yet hardly anyone holds entirely to either one or the other of these approaches (John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 3-14 [8-9]; Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* [London: Routledge, 1997], 88; cf. Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998], 5).

<sup>87</sup> Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 9-38 (15). From an individual viewpoint, psychologists have concluded that one's sense of identity with a group depends on their knowledge of their membership of that group combined with the value and emotional significance they attach to that membership (Henri Tajfel, "Introduction," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 1-11 [2]; Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 31).

<sup>88</sup> Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 3; Jon L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: The Body and the Household in Ancient Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 139-40; Ronald Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7;

<sup>89</sup> Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84; Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy, "Introduction," in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al. (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-12 (1-2); Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 35.

Most, if not all, of the values considered defining aspects of an ethnic group (both from their own perspective and from that of outsiders) rely on that group's interaction with people of other ethnicities.<sup>90</sup> The closer the outside group is geographically or culturally, the more relevant it tends to be to the insiders' perception of their own ethnic identity. If the groups on either side of the ethnic boundary are similar in significant ways, their differences must be emphasized more forcefully in order to eliminate the threatening ambiguity between them.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to genealogical concepts, certain cultural factors are utilized in the ethnic boundary-defining process as well.<sup>92</sup> "Culture" consists of a myriad items, many of which change and develop between generations due to environmental factors. By contrast, the contents of an ethnic identity are perceived of as being more permanent, even if they are not entirely fixed. Therefore, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between ethnicity and culture, even though the two overlap.<sup>93</sup> An ethnic group can adopt many aspects of another ethnic group's culture without the ethnic boundaries being

---

<sup>90</sup> Barth, "Introduction," 9-10.

<sup>91</sup> Additionally, there has to be a certain amount of similarity between two groups (such as geographic location) for them to interact at all; Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 95-96. This is evident, for example, in the Deuteronomist's efforts to distinguish the "children of Israel" from the surrounding people groups in the Levant (e.g. Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites in Deut 23:3, 7). Whilst the ideology outlining their differences is worded in the severest polemic, archaeological discoveries have revealed a similar material culture between the groups until quite late (186-88).

<sup>92</sup> Barth, "Introduction," 14; Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 36.

<sup>93</sup> Barth, "Introduction," 12-14. This discrepancy has also been recognised by archaeological theorists, who have shown that different ethnic groups may share a relatively homogenous material culture and still maintain a distinct ethnic identity. It is only when aspects of culture are perceived of as significant identifiers by group members that they can be said to have ethnic content; a factor which cannot always be determined from material remains alone (Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 91-95; cf. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*).

compromised.<sup>94</sup> However, specific cultural factors (religion often among them) will be valued as those which define one ethnic group from another, and thus form part of that group's ethnic identity. As Barth points out, "Ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences."<sup>95</sup> The cultural differences which inform ethnic categories tend to endure because they inform the social interactions between members of those categories and are in turn confirmed by those interactions.<sup>96</sup> These traits are often presented as having continuity with the historical practices of the ethnic group, in much the same way as the members are seen as having historical genetic connections with one another.<sup>97</sup>

One way in which historical continuity is often upheld is through the sense of shared history which ethnic groups tend to possess.<sup>98</sup> In the case of the Judeans, the Pentateuch's accounts of their Exodus from Egypt, covenant with Yahweh at Sinai, and settlement in the land of Canaan reveal a communal history that was significant for their ethnic and religious self-conception. The concept of a shared genealogy and history is something often transmitted to group members as part of their primary socialization and thus tends to be a pervasive part of their identity.<sup>99</sup> This may accompany phenotypical features,

---

<sup>94</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, "Introduction," 5; Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 35.

<sup>95</sup> Barth, "Introduction," 15.

<sup>96</sup> Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84. Jones points out that Barth's model has been criticized for not including what many see as substantive characteristics of ethnic categories, including language and culture, in his definition of ethnicity, thus ignoring important differences between ethnic groups which endure in varying social and historical contexts. However, Jones shows that defining an ethnic group by even a few cultural traits risks imposing a teleological reification on the ethnicity (86).

<sup>97</sup> Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 35.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell, "Identity," 504.

<sup>99</sup> Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 35.

language, or other deep-rooted cultural aspects over which the individual has little or no control. Thus, there is an ascribed aspect to ethnicity that can be difficult to ignore. Ethnic identity is not completely arbitrary: its effectiveness derives from making contact with people's real experiences.<sup>100</sup>

Yet there is also a certain achieved aspect to ethnicity. The meaning which an individual's ethnic identity holds for them is a matter of choice.<sup>101</sup> There will likely be social pressure concerning the maintenance of ethnic boundaries with outsiders, but individuals can choose not to undertake those actions. In some situations, especially if their ethnic group is a minority, individuals may feel that the social rewards achieved through forfeiting certain ethnic identifiers are worth the risk of rejection by their own ethnic group.

### *Social Identities*

The same can be said of any collective identity. The processes which contribute to the construction of ethnicity are similar to those which contribute to the construction of social identities such as gender, age, or class. All are culturally constructed categories based on the communication of differences.<sup>102</sup> They rely on members' behaviours to create and constantly reinforce them.<sup>103</sup> The archaeological theorist Sam Lucy summarizes: "Researchers are now starting to see [ethnicity] as an aspect of social relationships, again, more as a way of behaving than a thing, as an identity that can work

---

<sup>100</sup> Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 96-97.

<sup>101</sup> Liebkind et al., "Acculturation and Identity," 35.

<sup>102</sup> Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 85.

<sup>103</sup> Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," 97, 101.

on a number of different levels, and which cross-cuts other aspects of social identity such as gender, religion, and age.”<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, ethnic identity should not be considered in isolation from other social identities. Members of ethnic groups experience their ethnicity differently depending on their age, gender, class, professional, and other social identities.<sup>105</sup> These identity constructs all contribute to constrain the individual’s activities. They are expressed but also constantly created through social interactions, especially those which reinforce boundaries with the perceived “other.”

### **1.2.2 Materiality, the Body, and Identity**

Social interactions with the “other” primarily occur in the material world. They are enacted through individual bodies and make use of available materials; whether via speech, body language, bodily modifications, daily habits, division of labour, performance of rituals, gift exchanges, or any other means of expression. All of these actions or behaviours communicate the identities of the individuals involved in relation to one another. Thus, concepts of ethnic and social identities are inextricably linked to the material world and especially to the human body, without which they cannot exist.

Barth recognised this in his discussion of the cultural contents of ethnic identities. When he acknowledged that ethnic groups tend to hold up certain aspects of culture as definitive for the ethnic identity, he stated that these could consist of overt signals of

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.,” 86; cf. Tajfel, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>105</sup> Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 100; cf. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 7; Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 85; Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, “Introduction,” 9.



identity, such as dress, language, housing, or a general way of life; or of basic value orientations, meaning shared standards by which things are judged.<sup>106</sup>

However, social anthropologists now recognise that it is misleading to draw a dichotomy between material expressions of identity and “value orientations” or ideologies. Instead, they have demonstrated that individual bodies are the sites of social and cultural construction. Bodies are the material through which ideologies of ethnicity and social identity are performed; without them, these ideologies would have no substance.<sup>107</sup>

The critical social role of the body was not recognised in Western intellectual traditions until the last half century or so.<sup>108</sup> This was largely due to the influence of the Cartesian model, which portrayed the body as the inferior vessel in which the mind and spirit were housed. Later, the Darwinian school held that bodily expressions, especially facial expressions, were genetically determined, meaning they were universal and not affected by social context.<sup>109</sup> However, twentieth-century CE anthropologists discovered that the opposite was true: that bodily expressions are primarily social and learned.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Barth, “Introduction,” 14.

<sup>107</sup> Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 102; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 95; Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies: On Body Modification and Religious Materiality in the Hebrew Bible,” *HeBAI* 2/4 (2013) 532-53 (532).

<sup>108</sup> Summaries of the history of scholarship on the social role of the body can be found in Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 94-117; Meira Weiss, *The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 9-11; S. Van Wolputte, “Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004) 251-69; Z. Crossland, “Materiality and Embodiment,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. D. Hicks and M.C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 386-405.

<sup>109</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 94.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

There is no such thing as a “natural” human body devoid of societal influence.<sup>111</sup>

The cultural historian Marie Grace Brown summarizes these findings when she writes:

Contrary to what one might expect, there is nothing universal or unbiased in the ways our bodies move. Even the most basic human actions such as sitting, walking, jumping, or throwing a ball are historically and culturally specific “techniques of the body,” varying across nations, social classes, and time. In short, our physical habits are not natural or automatic, but the result of carefully taught social processes. Thus, techniques and movements are not much different than other marks of identity found on our bodies. As described by anthropologists, our skin serves as a visible “frontier” between our individual and communal selves, on which society’s rules are taught, enacted, and, oftentimes, refused.<sup>112</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu was the anthropologist who made perhaps the most comprehensive case for the body as the locus of identity. He suggested that the ways of acting, thinking, and relating that individuals learn growing up as members of particular ethnic or social groups imprint themselves on their bodies in the form of dispositions which Bourdieu called the *habitus*. These durable dispositions are bodily automatisms which express the most basic principles of organisation and structures of power in the group or society. Not only is the *habitus* inextricably linked to the body, it is also conditioned by the material

---

<sup>111</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 533; Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 141-42. This theory was particularly developed by sociologists in Marxist and feminist traditions, who recognized the role of the body in class and gender hierarchies (Weiss, *The Chosen Body*, 11).

<sup>112</sup> Marie Grace Brown, *Khartoum at Night: Fashion and Body Politics in Imperial Sudan* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 8. Brown examined how the dress of Sudanese women changed under Anglo-Egyptian imperial rule in the 20th century CE. The term “techniques of the body” was originally coined by Marcel Mauss in “Techniques of the Body,” *Economy and Society* 2 (1973) 70-88. He included in his study the practices of childbirth, childrearing, sleeping, waking, body movements, personal hygiene, eating, and reproduction. Other early contributions to the study of the body as a means of identity expression include Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*; Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, Second Ed. (London: Sage, 1996; originally published 1984).

context of the society which creates it, such as the modes of production and access to certain natural resources. Since the *habitus* is learned from such an early age, it is so deeply engrained in every individual that it exists just beyond the level of personal consciousness and social discourse. As much as it is shaped by social practices and structures, it also continually reinforces them through the daily practices of individuals.<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, Anthony Giddens identified a “practical consciousness” to reflect how bodily dispositions take place somewhere between the individual’s “discursive conscious” and “unconscious.” Like Bourdieu, Giddens acknowledged that dispositions are both structured by the society which creates them and continually structuring that society; a process he termed “structuration.” Where Bourdieu was criticized for not allowing for active human agency in his model, Giddens sought to demonstrate that human agency cannot be separated from the time, space, or body in which it necessarily exists.<sup>114</sup>

Paul Connerton took a different approach, but one which resulted in similar conclusions. Studying the role of collective memory in group identity formation, he found that knowledge of a group’s past is best conveyed and sustained through ritual performances, both formal (Connerton’s “commemorative ceremonies”) and informal (“bodily practices”). The performative nature of collective memory involves the development of habit or bodily automatisms in individual group members, which express

---

<sup>113</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72-95.

<sup>114</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 2. Another criticism of Bourdieu is that, like other anthropologists, he moves from a discussion of social practices into a discussion of ritual ones as if implying that ritual practices mirror social ones or are developed to address particular problems (Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 98). In the case of ancient societies in particular, the distinction between ritual and social worlds was not so clear-cut.

their membership of an ethnic or social group.<sup>115</sup> Connerton acknowledged that the inscribing practices of a community (such as writing) are significant for their potential to record the collective memory after the human body has stopped performing it.<sup>116</sup> However, the mnemonic aspects of incorporating practices (those enacted via the body) are acquired in ways which do not necessitate explicit reflection. This means that they are less susceptible to being questioned by their practitioners.<sup>117</sup> Individuals are unlikely to recognize or question the ideologies behind ethnic and social identities when they are the ones constantly expressing and reinforcing those identities in normative social interactions enacted through their bodies.<sup>118</sup>

Within the last twenty-five years or so, archaeological theorists have realized the implications of these findings for the study of ancient societies.<sup>119</sup> The material nature of collective identities means that archaeological remains can provide valuable insights into

---

<sup>115</sup> Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 4-5, 79-88. Connerton divides these habitual bodily practices into three categories: Techniques of the body (such as how gestures and intonation can serve as indicators of ethnicity); proprieties of the body (such as how specific table manners are naturalized in different historical eras as a means of signifying self-control and social control); and ceremonies of the body (such as the way the combination of heritage, wealth, taste, and skill in select activities is considered necessary for membership of a certain social class).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>118</sup> Or, as Bourdieu puts it: “Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.” For example,

“Systems of classification which reproduce, in their own specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions by sex, age, or position in the relations of production, make their specific contribution to the reproduction of the power relations of which they are the product, by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based: in the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident.”

This sense of a “natural world” is what Bourdieu terms the society’s *doxa* (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 164).

<sup>119</sup> Siân Jones in particular employed Bourdieu’s theory of social identity to the material study of ethnicity in the ancient world (*The Archaeology of Ethnicity*).

the ethnic and social identities of ancient peoples. Social relationships are reproduced in the same domain that food and material objects are made, used, exchanged, and consumed.<sup>120</sup> The archaeological theorists Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy summarize: “While people are reproducing the material conditions of their lives, they are both reproducing their society and their personal and group identities.”<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, studying material artefacts pertaining to language, clothing and adornment, food, possessions, and spatial organization as the media through which social relationships were enacted can reveal how social identities were expressed, provided the evidence is properly contextualized.<sup>122</sup> Mary Douglas, who examined the significant role played by concepts of purity and impurity in the organization of social roles, wrote,

There are no items of clothing or of food or of other practical use which we do not seize upon as theatrical props to dramatize the way we want to present our roles and the scene we are playing in. Everything we do is significant, nothing is without its conscious symbolic load.<sup>123</sup>

Douglas recognizes the material nature of identity expression, although calling the items utilized “theatrical props” makes them sound more contingent than they are. For example, clothing is one of the ways in which people modify their bodies in order to express their identity with and within a group.<sup>124</sup> Bodily modifications can include

---

<sup>120</sup> Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, “Introduction,” 6; cf. Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 96, 101.

<sup>121</sup> Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 9; Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 87. As mentioned above (n. 96), there is no one-to-one correspondence between material culture and ethnicity (or any other social group). It is only the way material culture was used in the reproduction of social relationships that may reveal its role in identity formation and expression.

<sup>123</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 100.

<sup>124</sup> In the case of ethnic identity, Lucy writes: “The role of dress and bodily adornment is good example. While rarely consciously articulated, the ways in which people dress are subject to a whole range of culturally informed ideas and expectations. Cultural differences in dress are one resource that can be seized

permanent modifications, such as bodily mutilations, or temporary ones, such as clothing, jewellery, accessories, hairstyles, or make-up. Whilst temporary modifications may seem less intimately connected to the individual, they require repeated performance and thus a more frequent assertion of the identity associated with them.<sup>125</sup> The archaeological theorists Lynn Meskell and Rosemary Joyce note that these “are more than mere costume or props; they are extensions of the materiality of the embodied person.”<sup>126</sup>

Another expression of ethnic and social identities, and one intimately connected to the body, is language. Like all bodily activities, language is influenced by social factors and contributes to the expressed and perceived identity of the speaker. Sociolinguists Susan Gal and Judith Irvine observe that: “As part of everyday behaviour, the use of a linguistic form can become a pointer to (index of) the social identities and the typical activities of speakers.”<sup>127</sup> Speakers and hearers of those linguistic forms often rationalize linguistic differences to have cultural and social significance. They identify linguistic features as expressing something about the speakers’ behaviour. Thus, understandings of language boundaries (by speakers and hearers as well as by ethnographers) tend to derive

---

on in the articulation of ethnic difference, as can be seen with national or regional costumes, or differences in military dress between countries” (Lucy, “Ethnic and Cultural Identities,” 96).

<sup>125</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 538. Stavrakopoulou writes: “Whether dressed with clothing, paint, cosmetics, perfume, a mask, a veil, headwear or ornaments, a body temporarily modified can performatively act on people, objects and spaces in ways that are just as powerful as those permanently modified.”

<sup>126</sup> Lynn M. Meskell and Rosemary A. Joyce, *Embodied Lives: Figuring Ancient Maya and Egyptian Experience* (London: Routledge, 2003), 10.

<sup>127</sup> Susan Gal and Judith T. Irvine, “Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation,” in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2000), 35-83 (37).

from a perceived correlation between a language and its speakers' essences.<sup>128</sup> This can erase the linguistic complexities within a “speech community” and bring political and moral concerns to bear on linguistic development.<sup>129</sup>

In the case of ancient societies, the bodily aspect of language — speech — is no longer available for study. Writing endures as a material artefact of the community's language (though it should not be assumed that literary languages were the same as spoken languages). Yet any material aspect of the book of Ezekiel from the sixth century BCE (if indeed there was one) has never been recovered. All that remains are textual witnesses (dating to many centuries later; see Section 1.1.1) to the language Ezekiel may have used. As discussed in Section 2.1, the linguistic and literary aspects of Ezekiel's work have been widely examined in the scholarship. However, the nature of language as one among many bodily expressions of identity mentioned in the book of Ezekiel has not been recognised.

This situation is reflective of biblical scholarship more broadly. Even though bodies play an important role in the realm of religion — and the Hebrew Bible bears plenty of

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 37, 39. The understanding of linguistic features as expressing something about the nature of the speakers is what sociolinguists call iconization. For example, the linguistic diversity within 20th century CE Macedonia did not correspond to the social and ethnic boundaries of other European nations, which Macedonia's neighbours attributed to the “uncivilized” nature of its people and their multiple loyalties, indicating untrustworthiness (64-65).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 35, 77. In the example of Macedonia mentioned above, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek claims to its land all rested on arguments of a “deep” linguistic relationship with its people: close social relationships were projected from the presumed closeness of the linguistic relationships and were used to justify political unity. Additionally, ethnographic attempts to map Macedonian languages erased the characteristic multilingualism of many citizens, which influenced attempts to eliminate this multilingualism through schooling and law as well as a recursive codification of a “national” literary language to produce maximal differentiation with perceived “foreign” language (68-71). Although such studies are helpful for thinking about language and identity in general, when studying ancient Near Eastern languages it must be remembered that Western intellectual traditions created many of the linguistic assumptions mentioned above.

evidence of this — the construction of the body in the Hebrew Bible has not been widely explored.<sup>130</sup> Francesca Stavrakopoulou has noted this trend in the field and attributes it in part to the enduring influence of Mary Douglas’s work. By emphasizing the Bible’s concern for the wholeness of the “natural” body, Douglas affirmed the Western dichotomy between body and mind (with the latter being superior), undermining those biblical texts which portray the material body as an ongoing social project.<sup>131</sup>

Stavrakopoulou summarizes:

The materiality of the body, and its potent religious significance, has been consistently undervalued within biblical scholarship. ...There remains a culturally-conditioned resistance in biblical studies to recognizing that the body is an essential site of religion. As such, practices which alter or modify the body have tended to be caricatured simply as ‘symbols’ or ‘markers’ of theological constructions and religious identities. Too often, the powerful and transformative significance of the body’s materiality has been missed.<sup>132</sup>

The current project addresses this gap in the scholarship for the book of Ezekiel. The text is a product of the writer’s ideology, but an important part of this ideology is how he understands the underlying material world. The social relationships he envisages take place in a material realm. Even the materiality of Ezekiel’s imagination (such as the spatial and hierarchical relationships in the restored Temple of Ezekiel 40-48) reflects his

---

<sup>130</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 533. There have been a few exceptions in the past 25 years, including: Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, “The Spectacle of the Female Head,” in *Off with her Head! The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1-14; Victor H. Matthews, “The Anthropology of Clothing in the Joseph Narrative,” *JSOT* 65 (1995), 25-36; Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality*; Susan Niditch, *My Brother Esau is a Hairy Man: Hair and Identity in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tamar S. Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim (eds.), *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010); K.B. Low “Implications Surrounding Girding the Loins in Light of Gender, Body, and Power,” *JSOT* 36 (2011) 3-30.

<sup>131</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 533-35. This issue is discussed in depth in Saul Olyan, “Mary Douglas’ Holiness/ Wholeness Paradigm: Its Potential for Insight and its Limitations” *JHS* 8 (2010) 55-74.

<sup>132</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 552.



ideology of the organization of society, which in turn can only exist through complicit human bodies. The way Ezekiel portrays the bodies within and outside of his community is not necessarily reflective of an historical reality, but of his interpretation of Judean identity in light of the forced migration to Babylonia.

Nevertheless, contemporary or near-contemporary historical data (such as the CUSAS 28 texts) provide necessary contextualization for Ezekiel's descriptions of bodily practices, whose significance is not immediately obvious to modern readers. Brown points out that textual witnesses to historical bodily practices always present somewhat of a challenge, especially when they concern those on the margins (such as forced migrants):

The body's role in constructing our identity and defining our place is at once too large and too mundane to capture on the page. Where evidence of the body does exist, it is often marginalized as anecdotal and thus outside "real" history. ...This is not a call to abandon the archive, but to mine and supplement it in creative ways: to recognize that intimate spaces and intimate practices honor stories and experiences not recorded elsewhere.<sup>133</sup>

The book of Ezekiel is a good text to study for this purpose. It is not an archive or "real" history, but it attests to a period of great upheaval. This means that ideologies and customs which were previously considered "natural" were revealed, through a new form of contact with other ideologies and practices, to be one possibility among many. Bourdieu showed that contact with competing discourses (such as other ethnic groups) provokes the examination of one's *doxa*, the ideology naturalised through the *habitus*. If group members are never forced to examine their *doxa*, that which is considered essential

---

<sup>133</sup> Brown, *Khartoum at Night*, 12. Brown's work examines the bodily practices of colonized women, so the "intimate spaces and intimate practices" she refers to are the domestic spaces and domestic bodily practices of those women.

in their society “goes without saying because it comes without saying.” By contrast, contact with other *doxas* “brings the undiscussed into discussion.”<sup>134</sup>

The book of Ezekiel exhibits a close attention to the body’s role in constructing identity because its author was made acutely aware of that identity and the means by which it was expressed in the course of his forced migration to Babylonia. This context necessitates further methodological discussion due to its significance to Ezekiel’s work and the large amount of attention it has received in biblical studies.

### **1.2.3 Forced Migrations, Trauma, and Identity**

#### *Forced Migrations*

Although the Judeans were in contact with the Babylonians and other foreign nations long before the forced migrations of the sixth century BCE, resettlement as a minority group in Mesopotamia was a new social situation for Ezekiel and his community. The loss of their nation and previously-established power structures meant the loss of aspects of identity which had had physical manifestations in Judah, such as national borders, the monarchy, and the Temple. In Babylonia, the Judeans’ group identity had to be expressed with limited resources. More than ever, the bodies of individual group members would have been prominent in expressions of ethnic and social identities.

Studies of forced migrant and refugee communities have shown that certain trends characterize their experiences of resettlement. Group members tend to feel marginalized in their new societies: a feeling compounded by the lower social status they tend to have

---

<sup>134</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 167-69. As Bourdieu puts it, if group members are never forced to examine the *doxa*, that which is considered essential “goes without saying because it comes without saying.” By contrast, contact with other *doxas* “brings the undiscussed into discussion.”

compared to that in their country of origin. This sense of liminality prompts a questioning of all aspects of forced migrants' lives, especially their ethnic identity.<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that this questioning probably began during their contact with the "other" which preceded the forced migration and continues long into their process of adaptation in the new environment.<sup>136</sup> Yet the physical removal to a new place would have brought its own specific challenges. The material world in and with which individuals were used to reproducing their ethnic and social identities is no longer accessible to them; it has been replaced by a new one. As a result, forced migrants are forced to change most or all of their practices, whether linked to food, labour, clothing, architecture, burial, land ownership, or any of the numerous kinship, ritual, and social rites influenced by these. As they develop new forms of culture to replace those lost, these must be negotiated and accepted within both the forced migrant community and the dominant society in which they reside.<sup>137</sup>

There has been a large amount of scholarly consideration of how the Judean forced migrations to Babylonia affected the development of Judean identity, which will be outlined in the History of Scholarship (Section 1.3.1). However, there has not been any sustained examination of how this context affected Ezekiel's ideology of collective identity in particular. It is evident from the book of Ezekiel that he was acutely aware that

---

<sup>135</sup> Ruth M. Krulfeld and Linda A. Camino, "Introduction," in *Reconstructing Lives, Recapturing Meaning: Refugee Identity, Gender, and Culture Change*, ed. Ruth M. Krulfeld and Linda A. Camino (Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994), ix-xviii (ix-x).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., x. Carly Crouch in particular has emphasized the long-lasting nature of contact between Judeans and foreign nations. She contends that scholars attribute too many of the developments in Judean identity to the Babylonian exile at the expense of adequate consideration of the relationship between Judah and Assyria long before this event (Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 83, 105-110).

<sup>137</sup> Krulfeld and Camino, "Introduction," x.

his community had to work out what it meant to be Judean in Babylonia, or risk losing their Judean identity completely. It was Ezekiel's goal to do the former, but achieving this was not without its challenges.

### *Trauma*

Forced migrations often involve a certain amount of trauma for the communities involved. Trauma theorists such as Vamik Volkan have recognized the additional threat which trauma presents to group identity. Volkan interprets the changes in collective identity which a traumatized group undergoes as the expected result of the feelings of helplessness, humiliation, anger, and mourning of the traumatized group.<sup>138</sup> Whereas forced migrations approaches can emphasize the agency of the group in reconstructing their identity, even under difficult circumstances, trauma theory tends to view the group as desperately grasping at their traditional customs and identities. Due to their frustrated aggression, certain aspects of those customs can become exaggerated. Conflicts or discriminations which already existed before the traumatic event are intensified, and hostile feelings towards other groups can increase.<sup>139</sup>

Trauma readings of the book of Ezekiel are numerous and their contribution to the field deserves acknowledgement (see Section 1.3.1). However, they tend to be based on approaches like Volkan's, which derive from the classical, psychological definition of trauma as represented by Cathy Caruth's work.<sup>140</sup> By contrast, William Reed outlines a

---

<sup>138</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Psychoanalysis, International Relations, and Diplomacy: A Sourcebook on Large-Group Psychology* (London: Karnak Books, 2014), 50.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 81.

<sup>140</sup> Such as Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

“cultural sociological model” of trauma, which accounts for the important role that cultural context plays in how individuals and societies respond to trauma.<sup>141</sup> This approach has been applied to biblical texts much less frequently, but is better suited to the study of ancient peoples whose psychological state cannot be examined. Ezekiel’s sense of the trauma absorbed into the identity of his community is evident in some parts of the book, especially the prophet’s extreme sign acts. Yet the trauma here is inextricably connected to the specific socio-historic context of the forced migrations to Babylonia. Both the forced migration and the trauma it must have involved form an important background for considering Ezekiel’s ideology of group identity, yet only the latter has been thoroughly considered in Ezekiel studies. A brief history of scholarship is outlined in what follows.

### **1.3 History of Scholarship**

Several scholars have applied forced migrations and trauma approaches to the study of the sixth-century BCE Judean migrations to Babylonia, yielding valuable results. The forced migrations model has created a better understanding of the Babylonian exile and therefore of the context of the book of Ezekiel. For the most part, however, the model has not been applied directly to the book of Ezekiel itself. By contrast, findings from the field of trauma studies have been applied to many aspects of Ezekiel: both the prophet and the writings named for him. Yet there are no comprehensive studies which examine Ezekiel’s role in the collective identity development of his community. Scholars have considered various aspects of Ezekiel’s ideology concerning the Judeans in Babylonia, usually in

---

<sup>141</sup> William Reed, “Yahweh’s ‘Cruel Sword’: The Manifestation of Punishment and the Trauma of Exile” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2018) 42-49.

relation to either the foreign nations surrounding them or the Judeans remaining in Judah. The significance and interplay of both concerns in the book of Ezekiel is not usually considered. Additionally, the role that bodily expressions of identity play in Ezekiel's ideology has largely gone unrecognized.

### **1.3.1 Ezekiel's Exilic Setting**

#### *Forced Migrations*

It has become popular in biblical studies to talk about the Judean exile to Babylonia as a forced migration. This term has the benefit of removing the sense of particularism surrounding the exile, bringing it into line with other similar events in history. Many groups were displaced by the Neo-Babylonian empire alongside the Judeans, and this was part of a much larger trend of imperial displacement that had existed in the ancient Near East for millennia. Examining these displacements in conjunction with one another and in light of similar events in world history up to the present day can provide socio-economic context for the Judean exile that is lacking in the extant textual witnesses. John Ahn writes,

Forced migration is in the first place a sociological phenomenon. It takes into account theories on migration, reasons for such force, and analysis of the displaced people. It seeks to identify extrinsic factors or forces that cause involuntary movements of peoples. Forced migration at large produces a host of structural problems: urban re-development, population structure, redistribution policies, regional redevelopment followed by challenges to identity and ethnicity, among others. Biblical scholars and specialists on the exilic period can benefit by reflecting on these and other issues that likely existed in some form or another also in the sixth century BCE.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Ahn, "Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile: Demarcating 597, 587, and 582 BCE," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 173-89 (178).

Additionally, the term forced migration is a more accurate description of the Judean displacements during the sixth century BCE. Ahn points out that whilst the first displacement in 597 BCE can correctly be called an exile from Judah to Babylonia, the second and third migrations (in 587 and 582 BCE) were technically internal displacements. Judah had been incorporated into the Neo-Babylonian empire by this time and the Judeans were being moved within the borders of that empire.<sup>143</sup> This probably would not have changed the way they experienced the migration, but it does change the economic principles behind it.

The issue raises another point, which is that terms such as “the exile” and “the exilic period” preference the Judeans who went to Babylonia in the sixth century BCE, just as the biblical narrative does. The terms do not acknowledge that there were numerous displacements throughout the history of Israel and Judah, such as the forced migrations of the northern tribes under Neo-Assyrian rulership. Nor do these terms encompass diaspora groups that chose to leave their homeland or to remain outside of it. Jill Middlemas has suggested the term “Templeless period” to refer specifically to the time between the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the building of the Second Temple in 515 BCE.<sup>144</sup> Whilst this has the benefit of acknowledging all the Judean communities (those who remained in Judah and those who left the land for any reason), it demarcates the 597

---

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 182. This distinction is helpful for the current project, as the differences between the 597 BCE migrants and those who remained in Judah longer (whether permanently or until 587 or 582 BCE) is important. Therefore, I will refer only to the 597 BCE group as exiles, in accordance with Ahn’s definition.

<sup>144</sup> Jill Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 5.

BCE exiles into a separate period.<sup>145</sup> For the purposes of the current study, it is helpful to talk about the period of Babylonian forced migrations, since Ezekiel's ministry (593-571 BCE) encompassed them all.

In 1989, Daniel Smith (now Smith-Christopher) was the first to examine the Judean exile to Babylonia as a forced migration. He compared the Judean exiles with communities that underwent similar ordeals in more recent history.<sup>146</sup> Smith categorizes the Judean community in Babylonia as Fourth World, a term referring to a minority group which has undergone forced migration and resettlement at the hands of an imperial power.<sup>147</sup> This can include refugees (their migration may be voluntary according to a literal definition, but is considered forced due to the circumstances which provoke it), prisoners of war, slave populations, and ethnic groups who are forcibly relocated for economic or political reasons.

Viewing the Babylonian exile in this way brings to light many of the issues the Judean community would have faced: the loss of their nation, institutions (political, cultural, and religious), status, possessions, and perhaps family members and neighbours.<sup>148</sup> The fall in their status would have affected Ezekiel's group, the Judean

---

<sup>145</sup> Ralph W. Klein, "Israel in Exile After Thirty Years," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 9-19 (12).

<sup>146</sup> Smith focuses on four case-studies for this purpose: the Japanese-American internment during World War II in the US; the South African movement of black Africans to Bantustans and the religious responses of "Zionist" churches; slave societies and their religious responses in the pre-civil war US; and the movement of the population of the Bikini Islands by the US in order to conduct atomic tests (Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* [Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989], 11).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>148</sup> Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 28; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 4; Krulfeld and Camino, "Introduction," ix-x; Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 74; Frank Ritchel Ames, "The Cascading



exiles of 597 BCE, in particular. According to the biblical account (2 Kgs 24:14-16), they had been members of the upper classes and skilled professions in Jerusalem. King Jehoiachin and his family may have been housed in the palace complex in Babylon, but a Jerusalemite priest like Ezekiel being located in the hinterlands of Nippur suggests that those outside of the royal family were not given similar special treatment.

John Ahn built upon Smith's work, studying the economic aspects of the forced migrations the Neo-Babylonian empire conducted. He showed that the migrations often focused on placing rebellious people groups in areas where agricultural productivity needed to be restored through the desalinization of irrigation canals.<sup>149</sup> Such unpleasant forced labour for people who had previously held positions of prestige would have been an added humiliation to that of their military defeat. With all the structures that had previously defined their society stripped away, the forced migrants' communal identity and all the hierarchies it contained (such as class, gender, and religious roles) was threatened.<sup>150</sup>

Against the odds, the Judean forced migrants survived these challenges. When Cyrus of Persia created his empire almost half a century later, the Judeans in Babylonia were still a distinct ethnic group; many took the opportunity to return to what they perceived as their homeland in the Levant. Smith claims that the Judeans' survival as a community relied on the reconstruction of their identity in light of their new circumstances in

---

Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritschel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2011), 173-87 (175).

<sup>149</sup> Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 84-85.

<sup>150</sup> Krulfeld and Camino, "Introduction," x; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 4.

exile.<sup>151</sup> Based on a similar understanding of the situation, many scholars attribute important theological and ethical developments in Israelite religion to the exilic period.<sup>152</sup>

Smith identified four developments in behaviour patterns which occurred in a variety of Fourth World societies he studied, all from the modern world (and therefore much better documented than the biblical exile) but all bearing some similarity to the Judeans' situation in Babylonia. He saw these behavioural adaptations as "survival mechanisms" against the dissolution of the groups' identities, which the Judeans also adopted. The first behavioural adaptation Smith identifies is structural change in leadership. For the Judean exiles, this change is evident in the growth in size of the *bēt- 'abôt* (extended family) and the rise of elders and prophets, including Ezekiel, as new community leaders.<sup>153</sup>

Linked to these developments is the split in leadership which frequently occurs between the new leadership of forced migrant populations; especially between those who advocate resistance towards the imperial power and those who urge acceptance. Smith sees the conflict between the prophets Jeremiah and Hananiah as evidence that this occurred among the Judeans.<sup>154</sup> Smith does not examine the situation as evidenced in the book of Ezekiel, other than to note the presence of elders in Ezekiel 8:1, 14:1, and 20:1.<sup>155</sup> Yet there is much more evidence in Ezekiel that there were changes and tensions within contemporary Judean leadership. Therefore, this is discussed in full in Sections 3.3

---

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 49.

<sup>152</sup> e.g. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 285; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 4; Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 28-29.

<sup>153</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 93-115.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 127-35.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

(Ezekiel's criticisms of the leadership of Jerusalem); 4.2 (Ezekiel's reconfiguration of the priesthood) and 4.3 (the changing role of prophets as religious authorities and the divisions between them).

Another development that often takes place in the wake of forced migrations occurs in the ritual practices of a group. Smith identifies an increased emphasis on ritualized weapons and ritual resistance against foreign groups, especially manifested in concerns over purity. Again, he does not examine the book of Ezekiel in particular, even though it mentions numerous ritual and purity concerns. These are discussed in detail in Sections 3.2.1 (Ezekiel's concern for the contamination of the Temple) and 4.2 (Ezekiel's rules for the purity practices of the priests).<sup>156</sup>

Finally, there is often a development of new folklore with heroes as models for diaspora behaviour. According to Smith, this can be observed in the biblical characters of Daniel, Joseph, Esther, and the Suffering Servant.<sup>157</sup> Ezekiel 14:14 and 20 exhibit Ezekiel's knowledge of Daniel's reputation for righteousness, alongside Noah and Job, whilst Ezekiel 28:3 attributes great wisdom to Daniel.<sup>158</sup> Ezekiel does not, however, create his own folklore heroes.

Smith's findings are informative for the study of Ezekiel, but it should be noted that all of the modern comparative examples he uses are minority groups that were completely and intentionally separated from the majority, making any type of integration

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 139-49.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 153-74.

<sup>158</sup> The book of Daniel appears to have been composed much later than Ezekiel, in the Second Temple period, but the tradition concerning Daniel as a folk hero must have preceded it. In Ezekiel, the name appears as Danel (*dn'l* instead of *dny'l*), which is the same name as the wise judge and father of Aqhat in the 14th century BCE Ugaritic text *The Epic of Aqhat*.

impossible. Smith was writing before the publication of the CUSAS 28 documents, which reveal a certain level of Judean integration into Babylonian life sooner than previously suspected. Therefore, Smith's emphasis on the marginalization of the exiles is understandable, if largely inaccurate.

John Ahn nuanced Smith's presentation of the situation (though he, too, wrote before the publication of CUSAS 28) by studying each wave of Judean forged migrants individually. Ahn argued that the group which arrived in Babylonia in 597 BCE suffered the most from the initial downward mobility which comes with forced migration, yet laid the groundwork for the new Judean diaspora identity.<sup>159</sup> Many of the events outlined in the book of Ezekiel take place between 597 BCE and the arrival of the second wave of Judean migrants in 587 BCE. If these parts of the book are indeed the product of this volatile decade, they provide crucial evidence for at least one Judean's response to the forced migration and all the trauma which attended it.

### *Trauma*

Trauma can be a significant outcome of warfare and forced migration, and as such has become the focus of several social-scientific approaches to the Judean forced migrations. Smith-Christopher deals with the trauma aspect of the forced migrations in more detail in his later work. He points out that although the propaganda surrounding Neo-Babylonian warfare wasn't as omnipresent as that of Neo-Assyria, Babylon was still

---

<sup>159</sup> Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 66-68.

“at base, focused on domination and exploitation of non-Babylonian populations for the benefit of a ruling elite.”<sup>160</sup>

The book of Ezekiel has received particular scrutiny through the lens of trauma studies due to its perceived first-hand accounts of the loss and powerlessness felt by the Judean elite in their new setting. This may be evidenced in emotive language such as: “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely” (Ezek 37:11).<sup>161</sup> Andrew Mein suggests that Ezekiel, stripped of the freedom of open dissent against Babylon, deals with this trauma by providing a subversive explanation for Babylon’s imperial achievements. For Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar is Yahweh’s tool, soon to be tossed aside when Judah’s punishment is complete and Jerusalem is restored.<sup>162</sup>

Other scholars, such as David Garber, focus more on the apparent psychological distress of the prophet Ezekiel as a literary figure. Garber defines trauma literature as “literature produced in the aftermath of a devastating or traumatic event that testifies to that event.”<sup>163</sup> Because of the enormity of the event’s effect on the individual’s emotions, it can exceed their understanding and thus be present in their memory as a “missed encounter” that they cannot easily articulate.<sup>164</sup> It disrupts their understanding of

---

<sup>160</sup> Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 76-77.

<sup>161</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 69-70.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>163</sup> David G. Garber, “Traumatizing Ezekiel, the Exilic Prophet,” in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, ed. Harold J. Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 215-35 (221); *idem.*, “‘I Went in Bitterness:’ Theological Implications of a Trauma Theory Reading of Ezekiel,” *Review and Expositor* 111/4 (2014), 346-57 (348).

<sup>164</sup> Garber, “Traumatizing Ezekiel,” 222.

themselves and their world, sometimes permanently.<sup>165</sup> The response by those who underwent the trauma is often delayed; when it does arise it can be intrusive and uncontrollably repetitive, involving hallucinations, dreams, and behaviours related to the traumatic event (intrusion symptoms).<sup>166</sup> This can also be accompanied by the contradictory impulse to protect oneself from everything connected with the trauma (constriction symptoms).<sup>167</sup>

Garber sees Ezekiel's repetitive, patchy presentation of the disaster which befell Jerusalem as evidence of the author's traumatization. He speaks of the "missed experience" of the traumatic event, which dominates the victim's mind whilst simultaneously resisting articulation.<sup>168</sup> Ezekiel's descriptions of theophany are overwhelming, almost traumatic themselves. For example, the metaphor of the hand of a deity being upon someone, as the hand of Yahweh is upon Ezekiel in 1:3, 3:14, 22, usually signifies sickness or plague in the ancient Near East.<sup>169</sup>

Trauma also involves a certain amount of guilt for those who have died, which in the case of Ezekiel may manifest itself in his presentation of the victims' deaths as just punishment for their sins. Ruth Poser has suggested that this interpretation of events is in

---

<sup>165</sup> Gottfried Fischer and Peter Riedesser, *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*, 3. Auflage (Stuttgart: UTB Ernst Reinhardt, 2003); also Bessel A. van der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory" in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. MacFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York: The Guilford Press, 2006); Poser, "No Words," 29-30.

<sup>166</sup> Garber, "Traumatizing Ezekiel," 222; "I Went in Bitterness," 348; Poser, "No Words," 30.

<sup>167</sup> Ruth Poser, "No Words: The Book of Ezekiel as Trauma Literature and a Response to Exile," in *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, ed. Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, Semeia Studies 86 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016), 27-48 (30).

<sup>168</sup> Garber, "I Went in Bitterness" 348.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 354. Garber deems Ezekiel's descriptions "vague," which is strange given the level of detail in Ezek 1-3 and 10 in particular.

line with how many victims of trauma struggle with feelings of guilt.<sup>170</sup> Those who survive feel guilty about those who did not. The sense of lack of control over their situation can be so unbearable that it is easier to blame themselves for what happened than to accept it.

Since it is impossible to conduct a psychological examination on Ezekiel, it is important not to infer too much from his perceived traumatization. Yet trauma and forced migrations studies can help to contextualize the challenges presented to the group identity of the Judeans in exile.

### **1.3.2 Ezekiel and Collective Identity**

Scholars who have examined Ezekiel's role in the identity (re)formation of the Judean forced migrants tend to emphasize either his desire to maintain a Judean identity in apposition to the Babylonian conquerors or his efforts to distance his community from the Judeans remaining in Judah. Some have recognized the existence of both impulses, but have not examined the interplay between the two in detail.

Many commentators have discussed the large number of Babylonian cultural influences in the book of Ezekiel. The majority conclude that these indicate a certain level of Judean integration into Babylonian culture and society. The implications for the Judeans' ethnic identity, if any, are explored in Section 2.1. Only a few scholars have considered the explicitly Babylonian setting of Ezekiel as the impetus for certain developments in Judean ethnic identity. For example, Rainer Albertz writes that the identity and survival of the forced migrant Judeans was threatened by their Babylonian

---

<sup>170</sup> Poser, "No Words," 36.

setting. They therefore emphasized identity markers that distinguished them from the surrounding peoples. Albertz includes the Sabbath, circumcision, and dietary laws as the “confessional badges,” which individual Judeans chose to wear to identify themselves with their ethnic group.<sup>171</sup>

Although Albertz’s study does not focus on Ezekiel in particular, he states that Ezekiel encouraged strictly separatist behaviour through his xenophobic Oracles Against the Nations in Chapters 25-32.<sup>172</sup> Albertz recognizes that developments in the group identity of the forced migrant community eventually caused them to consider the Judeans who remained in Judah as outsiders.<sup>173</sup> Yet he primarily attributes this sentiment to the period of Ezra and Nehemiah, not fully considering its effects for Ezekiel’s generation.

Lydia Lee also focuses on Ezekiel’s relationship to foreign nations. She sees the Oracles Against the Nations as somewhat universalist in that they recognize the flaws and frailty which the foreign nations share with one another and with Judah.<sup>174</sup> However, she concludes that the primary purpose of Ezekiel 38-39 is to create a restored national identity for Judah in the future: one which does not have “unstable boundaries” with other nations, whether those nations are enemies or allies.<sup>175</sup>

Carly Crouch has conducted important work on Israelite and Judean ethnic identity, although again her work is not primarily concerned with Ezekiel but with the book of

---

<sup>171</sup> Albertz, “More and Less Than a Myth,” 29, 31.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>174</sup> Lee, *Mapping Judah’s Fate*, 228

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.



Deuteronomy. In *The Making of Israel*, she warns against attributing all developments in Israelite identity to the period of the exile. Crouch points out that the influence of foreign empires, whether Assyrian, Babylonian, or Egyptian, was present in Israel and Judah well before the sixth century BCE. Therefore, expressions of Israelite identity that appear to have been conceived in opposition to foreigners should not necessarily be attributed to the exilic period.<sup>176</sup>

This is certainly a factor to consider when examining perceived Babylonian influences on the book of Ezekiel. However, in her article “What Makes a Thing Abominable? Observations on the Language of Boundaries and Identity Formation from a Social Scientific Perspective,” Crouch focuses on the use of *tô ‘ēbâ* (usually translated “abomination”) as a term which evokes disgust of the other. She notes that the word is particularly common in Ezekiel. Like the book of Deuteronomy, Ezekiel uses *tô ‘ēbâ* to describe anything foreign which he considers to defile the sacred. By presenting the foreign as disgusting, he seeks to dissuade his community from contact with ethnic outsiders.<sup>177</sup>

Yet many scholars emphasize that it was not foreign nations who were Ezekiel’s primary concern. To be more precise, it was not the foreign nations in Babylonia who were his primary concern; rather, it was the Judeans remaining in Judah, who had become as good as a foreign nation to Ezekiel. Dalit Rom-Shiloni has conducted the most detailed study of this ideology, stating: “At its earliest phase...setting boundaries of exclusion and otherness between the two Judean communities was a major tactic in reconsolidating the

---

<sup>176</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 91.

<sup>177</sup> Crouch, “What Makes a Thing Abominable?” 534.

Jehoiachin exiles' identity."<sup>178</sup> She claims that exilic biblical literature such as the book of Ezekiel is not interested in the diverse national groups surrounding the Judeans in Babylonia. Its goals with regard to ethnic identity are based entirely on establishing distance from Jerusalem.<sup>179</sup> The arguments Rom-Shiloni uses to support these claims are examined in more detail in Section 3.1

Rom-Shiloni is not alone in reading Ezekiel this way. Robert Wilson writes that Ezekiel sees himself and his community as the true Israel; those left in the land await Yahweh's forthcoming judgement in the form of death and destruction.<sup>180</sup> Meanwhile, scholars such as Martti Nissinen and David Vanderhooft have considered the numerous Babylonian influences in Ezekiel and concluded that their use does not indicate Ezekiel's interest in Babylon. Nissinen claims that Ezekiel leaves the reader asking whether he is at all interested in the affairs of the Judeans in Babylonia.<sup>181</sup> This is an exaggeration; Vanderhooft provides a more nuanced approach using the framework of acculturation psychology to examine the situation. He concludes that whilst Ezekiel provides evidence of some Judean integration into Babylonian society, the function of the book was to decode the experience of the exile for its Judean audience.<sup>182</sup> Although one aspect of this decoding was to reveal the shortcomings of Babylonian culture, Ezekiel's main purpose

---

<sup>178</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 144.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 139-146.

<sup>180</sup> Robert R. Wilson, "Forced Migration and the Formation of the Prophetic Literature," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 136.

<sup>181</sup> Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?" 92.

<sup>182</sup> Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon," 119.

was to criticize his fellow Judeans.

Acculturation psychology is an interesting way to examine contact and borrowing between two cultures, especially within a new setting such as the forced migration of the minority group.<sup>183</sup> However, it does not necessarily map onto ethnic identity. Ethnic identity relies on group members' sense of belonging to shared ancestry and the attributes they associate with this.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, it is possible for a minority ethnic group to adopt many cultural symbols from a majority group without their sense of distinct ethnic identity changing. It is clear that many or even all of the Judeans exiled to Babylonia maintained their identity as Judeans, especially the first generation to be displaced. The question is how Ezekiel believed this identity should be expressed.

Casey Strine and Kenton Sparks both recognize the multivalent aspects of Ezekiel's rhetoric to a large extent.<sup>185</sup> Strine writes,

The book of Ezekiel seeks to define the boundaries that mark off faithful Yahwism and legitimate Judahite nationalism over against both the Judahites that remain in the land and also their Babylonian captors. In order to succeed in this objective, the book disputes with both groups, arguing that their beliefs and behaviors are misguided.<sup>186</sup>

He notes the difference in the discourse Ezekiel uses with regard to other Judeans

---

<sup>183</sup> For an introduction to acculturation psychology, see Floyd W. Rudmin, "Critical History of the Acculturation Psychology of Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalization," *Review of General Psychology* 7/1 (2003), 3-37;" David L. Sam and John W. Berry, "Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5/4 (2010), 472-81; *eadem*. "Introduction," and "Theoretical Perspectives," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, Second Edition, ed. David L. Sam and John W. Berry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1-7, 11-29; Fons J.R. van de Vijver, John W. Berry, and Ozgur Celenk, "Assessment of Acculturation," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation*, Second Ed., 93-112.

<sup>184</sup> Liebkind et al, "Acculturation and Identity," 30.

<sup>185</sup> Casey Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile*, BZAW 436 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 2, 30; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 292-305.

<sup>186</sup> Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 2.

compared to his more veiled criticism of the Babylonians. Strine's main argument is a philological one: he examines Ezekiel's use of the "As I live" and "lifted hand" formulae to assert his community's moral superiority to both the Babylonians and the Judeans in Judah.<sup>187</sup>

Meanwhile, Sparks acknowledges Ezekiel's emphasis on maintaining the ethnic distinction of the Judeans in exile with regard to the foreign nations surrounding them. Yet he suggests that this concern for ethnic preservation is influenced by the Judeans in Judah, who the Judeans in Babylonia believe have intermarried with foreigners. The concept that the Judeans remaining in Judah intermarried with foreigners is suggested in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh 13:28-30), but there is some suggestion that Ezekiel held it as well (see Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.2). According to Sparks, one example of Ezekiel's attempts to assert the ethnic identity of his community was the increased significance attributed to Sabbath observation. Sparks posits that this practice worked as an identity marker both in Babylonia during Ezekiel's lifetime and, as Nehemiah records (Neh 13:15-22), in post-exilic Judah (see Section 3.2.3 for further discussion).

Sparks and Strine also acknowledge that Ezekiel's audience was not homogenous. Sparks cites the female prophets in Ezekiel 13 as revealing tensions within Ezekiel's community in Babylonia. Likewise, Strine notes that Ezekiel's descriptions of the resistance he encountered suggests that the elders in his community did not always agree with him.<sup>188</sup>

Strine examines the power that language can have in shaping ideologies. Yet most

---

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 2, 178.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 30.

scholars who recognize Ezekiel's influence on the identity formation of the Judean forced migrants do not consider the mechanics behind it. Ezekiel's rhetoric evidently resonated with at least some of his audience, and the Judeans in Babylonia formed an identity that was distinct from the foreign groups around them and the Judeans in Judah. Words can be effective, but the ideas behind them must have staying power in adverse conditions like the Judean exile. Ezekiel persuaded his community that they were essentially different from other people in their genetic makeup and bodily practices. He emphasized things they could do, and were possibly already doing, that reminded the Judeans in Babylonia of their group identity every day. Ezekiel addressed the diversity of his community, especially in terms of gender (Section 4.1), and asserted a hierarchical structure whereby Zadokite priests would be in charge of safeguarding the bodily purity of the people (Section 4.2). In Babylon, where the lack of Temple made this impossible, Ezekiel interpreted, through his own body, the role of the prophet for communicating Yahweh's presence (Section 4.3).

Understanding Ezekiel's ideology and why it was effective contributes to our ability to map the development of Israelite and Judean religion and ethnic identity. It reveals possible reasons why this particular version of that religion was the one canonized in the Hebrew Bible and thus considered authoritative in both Jewish and Christian tradition. Even more broadly, comprehending how Ezekiel sought to redefine the Judeans' identity in Babylonia sheds light by comparison on other people groups, both ancient and modern, who have undergone similar processes of dislocation. Given today's widespread and growing refugee crisis, there could not be a more pertinent time to reckon with this question.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Foreign Bodies**

Although the Judeans' encounter with foreign nations began long before 597 BCE, their defeat at the hands of Babylon provided a new context of contact between the two groups. Those who were taken to Babylonia found themselves a small ethnic minority in a foreign land governed by their captors. As revealed in the texts discussed above (Section 1.1.2), the Judeans likely encountered many different ethnic groups in Babylonia: both those who had been settled there for some time and those who had been brought as forced migrants from all parts of the Neo-Babylonian empire, such as the Philistines and Phoenicians.

The book of Ezekiel seeks to maintain and strengthen the boundaries between Judeans and non-Judeans. As is the case with most ethnicities, it is the "proximate other" who is the greatest concern in terms of defining the in-group's identity. Forced migrants from other nations and those native to Babylonia were the most geographically proximate to Ezekiel's community.

Even though Ezekiel does not contain an explicit oracle against Babylon, the book includes plenty of references to the imperial power. Scholars have long debated the significance of Ezekiel's frequent use of Babylonian loan words, idioms, and literary motifs. Recently, the discussion has resurfaced in force due to the interest ignited by the CUSAS 28 volume. In Section 2.1, I outline all of the proposed Babylonian textual influences in Ezekiel and discuss their possible implications for the collective identity of the Judeans in Babylonia. Although language can be a significant marker of identity, it is

one among many bodily practices which enact ethnic identity in the material world and should not be considered in isolation. Therefore, in Section 2.2, I show how examining the non-textual Babylonian traditions in Ezekiel creates a more complex picture of the writer's relationship to Babylon than the textual traditions alone suggest.

Ezekiel also mentions two other super-powers: Assyria and Egypt. The Neo-Assyrian empire had been decimated by the Neo-Babylonians, but its historical sway over Judah must still have loomed large in the Judean imagination. Meanwhile, Egypt continued to insert itself into Judean political affairs until the latter was decisively incorporated into the Neo-Babylonian empire in 587 BCE. Additionally, Ezekiel focuses much of his vitriol on Tyre, one of the Syro-Palestinian states which rebelled against Babylonian rule alongside Judah. Ezekiel's attitudes towards these and the other foreign nations he encountered is the subject of Section 2.3.

The role played by the body in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries is particularly significant. Because one of the core tenets of ethnic identity tends to be the belief in a genealogical connection between group members, there are usually certain expectations attached to practices involving marriage and reproduction. When an ethnic group is a minority, these issues become all the more urgent. Ezekiel aims to maintain the ethnic boundaries of his community in a variety of ways, including by representing the bodies of non-Judeans as foreign, threatening, and even monstrous. By evoking the Judeans' feelings of disgust towards those of different ethnicities, he seeks to prevent the assimilation and intermarriage that would ultimately lead to the demise of their distinct ethnic identity.

## 2.1 Babylon: Textual Influences

Written texts attest to the material practices of ethnic identity most explicitly through their use of language, dialect, and script. It is important to note that texts do not necessarily reflect the speaking conventions of all (or indeed, any) community members. Therefore, with regard to the ancient world, where written language is all that remains, we can only examine the written conventions of language. These include vocabulary (which can indicate dialect), literary style, and script.

In the case of the book of Ezekiel, there is no evidence of the written text in Hebrew until the first century CE, and even that is fragmentary.<sup>189</sup> Therefore, the script in which the book was originally written is not accessible for examination. As for the language, Ezekiel's Hebrew appears to have been heavily influenced by its Babylonian setting. Not only the vocabulary and idioms used by Ezekiel, but also some of the literary structures and motifs he employs seem to have been learned through contact with Akkadian. As sociolinguists such as Susan Gal and Judith Irvine have demonstrated, language changes (including literary language) are always motivated by social factors.<sup>190</sup> Thus, it is important to examine the particular changes in written Hebrew which the book of Ezekiel manifests. The incorporation of Babylonian language and literary practices may reveal something about the social relationships between the Judean forced migrants and their Babylonian neighbours.

---

<sup>189</sup> The Ezekiel scroll found in the Judean Desert could not be opened and other attestations to the book from that area are very fragmentary. A copy of Ezekiel 37 was found at Masada, dating to the First Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE). The earliest edition of the full book in Hebrew is in the Aleppo Codex, dating to the 10th century CE.

<sup>190</sup> Gal and Irvine, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," 77.



The publication of CUSAS 28 prompted a flurry of new articles discussing the Babylonian nature of the book of Ezekiel.<sup>191</sup> Many scholars posited a connection between the cuneiform evidence of the Judeans' integration into Babylonian institutions and Ezekiel's apparent familiarity with Babylonian culture. For example, Abraham Winitzer writes that the CUSAS 28 materials provide "a picture of a thriving and assimilating Judean community in Babylon." He continues: "In this light the prospects of a Judean priest prophesying to a Judean community in early sixth-century Babylonia should not surprise us; nor should the possibility of his message falling under the sway of the Babylonian world seem astonishing."<sup>192</sup>

Mesopotamian influences can be observed in many parts of the Hebrew Bible, but not to the same extent and in as clear a context as the book of Ezekiel. On the one hand, this makes the social interactions more tangible. On the other, it restricts which social interactions one can talk about. Any Mesopotamian influence Ezekiel is supposed to have encountered in forced migration must have been current in sixth-century BCE Babylonia. Furthermore, it cannot have definitively entered the Judean psyche before then, either through the Neo-Assyrian empire or contact with Arameans.<sup>193</sup> Otherwise, there would be no proof that Ezekiel's ostensible location in the sixth-century BCE forced migration

---

<sup>191</sup> Including Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon;" Abraham Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel Among the Babylonian Literati," in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 163-216; Jonathan Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in all Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture," in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 223-252; Madhavi Nevader, "Picking up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40-48?"; and the whole of WdO 45 (2015).

<sup>192</sup> Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 165.

<sup>193</sup> Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?" 95.

had anything to do with his adoption of Mesopotamian language.

Even taking these restrictions into consideration, commentators have proposed numerous instances of Babylonian textual influence in almost every part of Ezekiel. In what follows, I provide a complete collation of these contributions: something which, to my knowledge, has not been done since Daniel Bodi's *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* in 1991.<sup>194</sup> The large number of publications on the topic since this date, and especially since CUSAS 28 was published in 2014, necessitate a new review of the evidence. I divide the data between simple vocabulary (including loanwords and idioms; Table I) and more complex literary motifs (Table II).

### 2.1.1 Vocabulary

Almost as soon as the Akkadian language was deciphered, scholars began positing Babylonian loanwords in the book of Ezekiel.<sup>195</sup> Often, this was part of the attempt to decipher some of the many *hapax legomena* in the book, and it proved a fruitful (if not always accurate) avenue of research. In 1884, Friedrich Delitzsch appended to Baer's *Liber Ezechielis* a list of 37 words or phrases from Ezekiel which he believed to be influenced by Akkadian.<sup>196</sup> Other scholars soon contributed further suggestions. Most

---

<sup>194</sup> Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, OBO 104 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1991), 35-41.

<sup>195</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 35.

<sup>196</sup> Friedrich Delitzsch, "Specimen Glossarii Ezechielico-Babylonici," in *Liber Ezechielis*, ed. S. Baer (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1884), x-xviii.

agreed that Akkadian influence was evident, and added to Delitzsch's list of loanwords.<sup>197</sup>

However, some were more intrigued by the Aramaicisms which seemed to be littered throughout Ezekiel. Stephen Kaufman conducted an important study in 1974 showing that many of the apparent Akkadian loanwords in the Hebrew Bible probably arrived there via Aramaic. Often, it is impossible know for certain whether an Akkadian word reached Hebrew via Aramaic or whether it reached Aramaic and Hebrew independently. Kaufman's work showed that Aramaic and Babylonian influence on Ezekiel are not mutually exclusive; they are necessarily entangled.<sup>198</sup> The official language of the Neo-Babylonian empire was the Late Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, but the language its various people groups used for communication was Aramaic, which had been the *lingua franca* of the Near East since the seventh century BCE.<sup>199</sup> Educated Judeans probably knew Aramaic before their forced migration (see 2 Kgs 18:26). Once in Babylonia, they may have encountered an Aramaic littered with Babylonian loanwords. The CUSAS 28

---

<sup>197</sup> Garfinkel's dissertation summarizes the history of scholarship prior to his own contribution in 1983, and Daniel Bodi does the same up to 1991. Since two such detailed summaries are already in existence, I will focus the majority of my discussion on research published in the last three decades. Academic knowledge of both the Akkadian language and the conditions of the Judeans in forced migration has greatly improved during this time, rendering many of the early-twentieth century debates outdated. (Stephen P. Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences on Ezekiel" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1983), 1-7; Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 35-41).

<sup>198</sup> Stephen A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 22-27.

<sup>199</sup> There is some evidence of Aramaic on Neo-Babylonian administrative documents (e.g. names written in Aramaic on the edges of cuneiform tablets to identify their contents), leading many to believe that the Neo-Babylonian empire used Aramaic as an administrative language in addition to Akkadian. However, since Aramaic was usually written in ink on papyrus, little of it remains. Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *A History of Babylon, 2200 BC – AD 75* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 173.

texts prove that the Judean forced migrants had contact with the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, which Kaufman demonstrated was itself influenced by Aramaic.<sup>200</sup>

With regard to determining Ezekiel's level of integration into Babylonian culture, the question of whether a word entered Hebrew through Aramaic or Akkadian is less important than the question of whether it was already present in the Judean dialect before the forced migrations. The limited evidence available and the long-term nature of both Mesopotamian and Aramean influences on the Hebrew language mean it is impossible to conclude with any certainty how many of the Babylonian words used by Ezekiel were learned in the forced migration. However, the much higher frequency of Babylonian terms in this text compared to any other in the Hebrew Bible suggests that many are indeed due to its Babylonian context, or at least a writer who wished to emphasize a Babylonian context.

The first attempt to collate all the Babylonian loan-words in Ezekiel was Stephen Garfinkel's 1983 dissertation *Studies in Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel*. Garfinkel made definitive statements about each proposed loan based on its usage in Akkadian. If it matched the usage of the word in Ezekiel, especially if that word was a *hapax*, he concluded it was likely to be a loan word.<sup>201</sup> More recent scholars have followed this model, leading to some of the previously-suggested loan words being discarded as well as new loans being discovered.<sup>202</sup>

---

<sup>200</sup> Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 25-26; cf. Isaac Gluska, "Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel," in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Jacob Klein*, ed. Yitschak Sefati et al. (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 721.

<sup>201</sup> Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 7.

<sup>202</sup> E.g. Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 166.

Based on these criteria, Garfinkel designated each word the likelihood of possessing a Babylonian origin on a scale from “impossible” to “definite.” Table I includes all of the Babylonian loan words, calques, and idioms which he deemed possible, probable, or definite. Garfinkel’s work is a valuable resource, but it should be noted that he avoids emending the Masoretic Text at all costs. Additionally, he does not always explore the Aramaic background of a term, even where it could potentially discredit an Akkadian one. Several of the words he deems “possible” direct loans from Akkadian are very tenuous. Even some of the words Garfinkel labelled “definite” are cast in doubt by more recent scholarship.

Jonathan Stökl in particular has undertaken deeper research into the Aramaic backgrounds of some of the loanwords and terms in Ezekiel. He found that some were almost certainly used by Judeans before the exile, and others are simply too uncertain to make any kind of definitive statement.<sup>203</sup> I have updated and annotated Garfinkel’s catalogue based on the research that has been conducted on Babylonian loans in Ezekiel since 1983. Even with these amendments, the large number of items included in the following charts reveal that Ezekiel was influenced by the languages of sixth-century BCE Babylonia.

Some scholars have observed patterns in the Babylonian words Ezekiel adopts. For example, Vanderhooft pointed out that many of the loanwords belong to the spheres of everyday life and business, including names of professions such as barber (*gallāb* from *gallābu*; Ezek 5:1), sailor (*mallāḥ* from *malāḥu*; Ezek 27:9, 27, 29), and bodyguards

---

<sup>203</sup> Stökl, “Schoolboy Ezekiel: Remarks on the Transmission of Learning,” *WdO* 45 (2015), 50-61; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel’s Access to Babylonian Culture.”

(*qērôbîm* from *qurbu*; Ezek 23:5-6).<sup>204</sup> Similarly, words like *’eškār* (from *iškaru*, corvee labour or its monetary equivalent; Ezek 27:15), and *ḥābōl* (from *ḥubullu*, debt; Ezek 18:7, 12, 16; 33:15) could easily have entered Judean use from the types of business transactions evident in the CUSAS 28 documents.<sup>205</sup>

It is particularly noteworthy that *iškaru* and *ḥubullu* are both names of literary corpora that would have been part of the basic training for a cuneiform scribe. This has caused some scholars to reflect on whether Ezekiel may have received any Babylonian scribal training. Whereas Garfinkel and Nissinen hint at the possibility, Winitzer and Stökl make a strong case for it.<sup>206</sup> However, their arguments are not based on loanwords, which they agree could have been learned through fairly casual contact with cuneiform scribes and Aramaic speakers. Rather, Stökl and others have shown that any reason to suspect the writer of Ezekiel had a high level of cuneiform scribal training must be based on his use of literary motifs from Akkadian texts which would only have been accessible to those who received the highest level of cuneiform scribal training (see Table II).<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113.

<sup>205</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 107.

<sup>206</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 140; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?” 98; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 207; Stökl, “Schoolboy Ezekiel,” 51; “A Youth Without Blemish,” 251-52.

<sup>207</sup> Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 252.

**Table I: Vocabulary**

Hebrew Vocabulary	Akkadian Vocabulary	Reference	Garfinkel's Designation
<sup>208</sup> וֶזֶם	<i>aj(a)/ â</i> , alas, woe	Ezek 21:10	Probable
<sup>209</sup> אֲבִנֵּה <i>'elgābîš</i>	<i>algamešu</i> , a type of soft stone	Ezek 13:11, 13; 38:22	Probable
<sup>210</sup> אֲבִנֵּה <i>'ēš</i>	<i>aban išāti</i> , fire-stone (appears in magic and ornamental contexts)	Ezek 28:14, 16	Probable
<sup>211</sup> אֶגַּפּ (פִּימ)	<i>agappu</i> , wing	Ezek 12:14; 17:21; 38:6, 9, 22; 39:4	Possible
<sup>212</sup> אֵחַ ( <i>mē'ahad</i> )	<i>aḥamma</i> , alone, by oneself, or used to introduce new topic	Ezek 18:10	Probable
<sup>213</sup> אֲחֵתֶּךָ	<i>aḥḥātu</i>	Ezek 16:45-46, 48, 49, 51[K], 52, 56; 23:31-33	Possible
<sup>214</sup> אֵיִל	<i>awīlum/ amēlu</i> , (free) man	Ezek 15:15; 17:13; 31:11; 32:21 (2 Kgs 24:15)	N/A

<sup>208</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 31-33.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 14, 21-22.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 14, 23-27; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 584-85; Gluska, “Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel,” 732-33; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 112.

<sup>211</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 28-30: although this appears to be a loanword, there is no evidence of *agappu* being used in a military context, as it is in Ezekiel.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. 14, 34-36, though Garfinkel notes that these uses of *aḥamma* are only attested in OA, OB, and SB, so we cannot be sure that Ezekiel would have been familiar with them.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 14, 37-38. The Akkadian influence is evident in the way that the Hebrew uses the same word for singular and plural. Akkadian uses the same word except for the doubled *ḥ* of the plural, which cannot be reflected in Hebrew.

<sup>214</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 118; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 165; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 234. Paul V. Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 28-29) notes that the only time *amēl* is transcribed into Hebrew (the name Amēl-Marduk in 2 Kgs 25:27), it is spelled וַיִּל, with the expected mater for the long ī/ē vowel.

<sup>215</sup> <i>’ēm hadderek</i>	<i>ummi ḥarrāni</i> , crossroads, fork in road, beginning of a military campaign	Ezek 21:26	Probable
<sup>216</sup> <i>’ēn</i>	<i>jānu/ ānu</i> , there is not	Ezek 13:15	Possible
<sup>217</sup> <i>’eškār</i>	<i>iškaru</i> , (corvée) work, manpower, assignment (and their monetary equivalents)	Ezek 27:15 (Ps 72:10)	N/A
<sup>218</sup> <i>’iššōt</i>	<i>aššātu</i> , women	Ezek 23:44	Probable
<sup>219</sup> <i>’atīq</i>	<i>mētequ/ etēqu</i> , passage/ to pass	Ezek 41:15[Q], 16; 42:3, 5	Possible
<sup>220</sup> <i>bī’ā</i>	<i>bī’u</i> , drainage opening, filter, gutter, entrance?	Ezek 8:5 ( <i>hapax</i> )	Possible

<sup>215</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 45.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 14, 41-42. AHW (411b) states that *ajjānu* (“where?”) derives from *jānu*, and an interrogative sense is desirable here (hence many commentators emend *’ēn* to *’ayyēh*), so Garfinkel claims Akkadian influence is possible even though Ezekiel uses *’ēn* in its regular Hebrew sense many times elsewhere.

<sup>217</sup> Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 42; Gluska, “Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel,” 729-30; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 108; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 165. Stökl (“A Youth Without Blemish,” 245 and “Schoolboy Ezekiel,” 59) and Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 59) point out that the sense in Ezekiel is the same technical sense as the Neo-Babylonian, not the Aramaic “field.” Mankowski says that it means “a commodity brought from a distance to gratify someone in an advantageous position.”

<sup>218</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 46-47; Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 45-46; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel’s Access to Babylonian Culture,” 244. LXX translates this “to do,” seeing it as corruption of *’šh*.

<sup>219</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 48-49; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166. Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 158 n.19) does not view either of these words as an appropriate loan-vector.

<sup>220</sup> Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 14, 50-52) states that the meaning “entrance” for Akkadian *bī’u* is doubtful, but it is possible that the writer of Ezekiel envisaged a statue in a drainpipe since this also occurs in *Maqlû*. Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 43) shows that this word was used in Aramaic as well, though it is unclear if it was a loan from Akkadian.



<i>bērōmîm</i> <sup>221</sup>	<i>barmu/ birmu/ burummu</i> , multi-coloured (piece of clothing)	Ezek 27:24	Definite
<i>bêt-lâ</i> <sup>222</sup>	<i>bīt</i> , near to	Ezek 1:27	Possible
<i>bittēqûk</i> <sup>223</sup>	<i>batāqu</i> , to cut off	Ezek 16:40	Definite
<i>gallāb</i> <sup>224</sup>	<i>gallābu</i> , barber	Ezek 5:1 ( <i>hapax</i> )	Definite
<i>gēlômîm</i> <sup>225</sup>	<i>gulēnu</i> , coat	Ezek 27:24	Possible
<i>gammādîm</i> <sup>226</sup>	<sup>al</sup> <i>Qumidi</i> , a city-state in Phoenicia or Syria	Ezek 27:11	Probable
<i>dōḥan</i> <sup>227</sup>	<i>d/ṭuḥnu</i> , millet	Ezek 4:9	Definite
<i>dālāḥ</i> <sup>228</sup>	<i>dalāḥu</i> , to stir up, confuse	Ezek 32:2, 13	Definite
<i>dūmā</i> <sup>229</sup>	<i>damāmu</i> , to moan	Ezek 27:32	Probable

<sup>221</sup> Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 14, 50-52; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 246; Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 166.

<sup>222</sup> Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 14, 53. Emendation to *bayit* would also solve the problem of having a construct right before a preposition.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. 14, 56-57.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. 14, 60; Gluska, "Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel," 730-31; Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?" 94; Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon," 112. Stökl ("A Youth Without Blemish," 245 and "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 57) and Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 51) show that although this word occurred on *lú = ša I*, it was probably common in Aramaic as well as Akkadian.

<sup>225</sup> Garfinkel ("Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 14, 61) notes that this word may have entered Hebrew through Aramaic *gēlīmā*.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. 14, 62-63.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 14, 64.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 15, 65.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 15, 66-67.

<i>dērô<sup>230</sup></i>	<i>(an)durāru</i> , manumission (of slaves)	Ezek 46:17 (Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1; Jer 34:8, 15, 17)	N/A
<i>dān<sup>231</sup></i>	<i>dannu</i> , (wine) vat(s)	Ezek 27:19	N/A
<i>(yad haz)zārîm<sup>232</sup></i>	<i>(qāt) zā'irî</i> , enemy hands	Ezek 7:21; 11:9; 28:10; 30:12	Definite
<i>ḥābōl/ā<sup>233</sup></i>	<i>ḥubullu</i> , debt, interest-bearing loan, interest; <i>ḥabālu</i> B, to acquire on credit; or <i>ḥabālu</i> A, to oppress, wrong, ravage	Ezek 18:7, 12, 16; 33:15 (Neh 1:7)	Definite
<i>ḥay'ānî<sup>234</sup></i>	<i>nîš DN</i> oath formula	Ezek 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11	N/A
<i>ḥêlêk<sup>235</sup></i>	<i>Ḫilakku</i> , Cilicia	Ezek 27:11	Definite

<sup>230</sup> Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 106-14; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 247. Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 50-51) explains this as a loan-adaptation due to the removal of the Akkadian *an-* prefix whilst maintaining the technical meaning of the word, as opposed to the general meaning of the *drr* root, which in both Hebrew and Akkadian means to be fluid or free moving.

<sup>231</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166. Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 46) shows that the word was used in Aramaic, but it dates to the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods in Akkadian, so it could have entered Hebrew through either.

<sup>232</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 85-86; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

<sup>233</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 71; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166. Yet Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 56) and Stökl (“A Youth Without Blemish,” 242) both show that intermediation through Aramaic is likely. Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 55-56) sees an Akkadian loan as impossible due to the different meanings of the Akkadian (debt, to borrow) and the Hebrew (to seize a pledge). He concludes that a loan from the Aramaic *ḥ(y)bwl*, interest, is possible.

<sup>234</sup> Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 14-17; 53-57. Strine notes that this Akkadian oath formula was particularly favoured in Neo-Babylonian period.

<sup>235</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 73-74.

<i>ḥelbôn</i> <sup>236</sup>	<i>Ḥilbunu</i> (a city known for its wine)	Ezek 27:18	Definite
<i>ḥōpeš</i> <sup>237</sup>	<i>taḥapšu</i> , a covering for a horse	Ezek 27:20	Probable
<i>ḥêq hā'āreš</i> <sup>238</sup>	<i>ina irat eršeti/ kigalle</i> , the breast of the (nether)world	Ezek 43:14	Probable
<i>ḥašmaḥ</i> <sup>239</sup>	<i>elmēšu</i> , a precious stone, amber, electrum?	Ezek 1:4, 27; 8:2	Probable
<i>yeza</i> <sup>240</sup>	<i>izūtu</i> , sweat	Ezek 44:18 ( <i>hapax</i> )	Definite
<i>kāḥal</i> <sup>241</sup>	<i>guḥlu</i> , antimony	Ezek 23:40	Definite
<i>kālil</i> <sup>242</sup>	<i>kullulu</i> , crown; or <i>kilīlu</i> , battlement with parapet	Ezek 16:14; 27:3; 28:12	N/A
<i>kilmad</i> <sup>243</sup>	<i>Kullimeri/ Kulmadara</i> (GN)	Ezek 27:23	Possible

---

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 15, 78.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 15, 79-80.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 15, 76-77. Garfinkel notes that Neo-Babylonian building descriptions of the Babylon temple use this term for the foundation site of its tower. Cf. Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113.

<sup>239</sup> Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94; Shawn Zelig Aster, “Ezekiel’s Adaptation of Mesopotamian *melammu*,” WdO 45 (2015), 10-21 (14); Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 112; Peter Kingsley, “Ezekiel by the Grand Canal: Between Jewish and Babylonian Tradition,” JRAS 3/2 (1992), 339-346 (342). Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 81) notes that *ḥašmānu*, blue-green (wool/ stone) is also possible. Bodi (*The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 82-94) emphasizes the correspondence with *elmēšu* in *Erra and Išum*.

<sup>240</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 87.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 15, 88-89; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 112.

<sup>242</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166; Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 63) believes the Aramaic *kilīlu* is cognate with the Akkadian and not a loan word due to the fact that the form with *i* only occurs in Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian, before Aramaic was in existence.

<sup>243</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 15, 90-91: the Akkadian is very uncertain.

<i>kēsātôt</i> <sup>244</sup>	<i>kasû</i> , to bind; or <i>kasîtu</i> , (magical) conainer	Ezek 13:18	Definite
<i>mâ ʾāmullâ libbātēk</i> <sup>245</sup>	<i>libbāti malû</i> , to be filled with anger	Ezek 16:30	Definite
<i>maklûlîm/ miklôl</i> <sup>246</sup>	<i>makla/ulu</i> , a type of garment	Ezek 23:12; 27:24; 38:4	Not treated
<i>melek mēlākîm</i> <sup>247</sup>	<i>šar šarrāni</i> , king of kings (mostly from Neo-Assyrian period)	Ezek 26:7	N/A
<i>mallāh</i> <sup>248</sup>	<i>malāhu</i> , sailor	Ezek 27:9, 27, 29 (Jonah 1:6)	N/A
<i>māneh</i> <sup>249</sup>	<i>manû</i> , mina	Ezek 45:12 (1 Kgs 10:17; Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:70-71)	Definite

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. 15, 94; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 235-36.

<sup>245</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 95-96; Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 77-80; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 95; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 165; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 237-38. Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 66) notes that this term occurs as the loan-translation *ml’ hmh* in Dan 3:19 and Esther 3:5; 5:9.

<sup>246</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166. Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 16, n.3) does not treat this word in his study of Akkadian loanwords because he sees it as deriving directly from the Sumerian MUK.LAL.

<sup>247</sup> Gluska, “Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel,” 733-34.

<sup>248</sup> Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 93; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113. Stökl (“A Youth Without Blemish,” 244) notes that there is debate over whether this word entered Hebrew via Akkadian or Aramaic, but it is well-represented on the lexical list *lû = ša*. Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 69) shows it is common in Aramaic, yet whilst Mankowski admits the gemination of the second root consonant makes it look more like an Aramaic loanword than an Akkadian one, he posits that this could have been undertaken independently in Hebrew to make the word fit the *qattāl* pattern used for professions.

<sup>249</sup> Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 16, 102-103) and Vanderhooft (“Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 109-110) suggest that the Mesopotamian sexagesimal system may have influenced the meaning of this word in Ezekiel. Stökl (“A Youth Without Blemish,” 246) classifies this as a “loanshift,” as the word was probably adopted into Hebrew in a Hebraicised form. Kaufman (*The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 69) and Mankowski (*Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 94-95) note that the late and rare usage in Hebrew suggests that it is a loan word from Akkadian.

<i>mimšaḥ</i> <sup>250</sup>	<i>mašāḥu</i> , A to measure; B to shine brightly, flare up	Ezek 28:14	Possible
<i>nādān</i> <sup>251</sup>	<i>nudunnû/ nidnu</i> , gift, dowry	Ezek 16:33	Definite
<i>nēhar kēbār</i> <sup>252</sup>	<i>nār kabari</i> , the Kabaru canal/ river	Ezek 1:1, 3; 3:15, 23; 10:15, 20, 22; 43:3	Definite
<i>nēḥōšet</i> <sup>253</sup>	<i>nuḥšu/ naḥšātu</i> , abundance, plenty, genital outflow	Ezek 16:36	N/A
<i>sūgar</i> <sup>254</sup>	<i>šigaru</i> , neckstock	Ezek 19:9 ( <i>hapax</i> )	Definite
<i>‘izēbônîm</i> <sup>255</sup>	<i>uzubbû</i> , divorce money	Ezek 27:12, 14, 16, 19, 22, 27, 33	Possible
<i>pannag</i> <sup>256</sup>	<i>pannigu</i> , a small bread/ type of flour	Ezek 27:17 ( <i>hapax</i> )	Definite
<i>pāraś rešet</i> <sup>257</sup>	<i>ana šakān kamāri</i> , to throw/ gather into a net	Ezek 17:19-20	N/A

<sup>250</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel.” 16, 100-101.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 111-12; Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 100-101; Gluska, “Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel,” 731-32; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 108-109; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 240-41.

<sup>252</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel.” 16, 114.

<sup>253</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

<sup>254</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 116; Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 108-109; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 111; Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 242) points out that vowels match Aramaic, but there is no evidence of this word until Syriac and Late Jewish Literary Aramaic, whereas it is common in lexical lists and Assyrian propaganda.

<sup>255</sup> Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 16, 117) suggests that the different contexts in which the Akkadian word is used means we cannot be sure about its influence on the Hebrew.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. 16, 118-19.

<sup>257</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 162-82 (especially as consequence of disloyalty to god/s as exemplified in *Erra and Išum*).

<i>šûrâ</i> <sup>258</sup>	(u)šurtu, plan, blueprint, model	Ezek 43:11	N/A
<i>šārab</i> <sup>259</sup>	šarāpu, to burn, refine	Ezek 21:3	Probable
<i>qēbōl</i> <sup>260</sup>	qablu, warfare, battle	Ezek 26:9	N/A
<i>qāḥ</i> <sup>261</sup>	qû, (flax) plant	Ezek 17:5	Probable
<i>qēnēh hammiddā</i> <sup>262</sup>	qan middati, measuring reed	Ezek 40:5	N/A
<i>qô ‘a</i> <sup>263</sup>	Qutu, Gutium	Ezek 23:23	Possible
<i>qērôbîm</i> <sup>264</sup>	qurbu/ qurbûtu, royal intimate; (body)guard	Ezek 23:5-6	N/A
<i>rāḥaq</i> <sup>265</sup>	rêqu, to relinquish claim, forfeit right	Ezek 8:6; 44:10; 11:15-17	N/A
<i>rô š haššānā</i> <sup>266</sup>	rēš šatti, the New Year, beginning of year	Ezek 40:1	Definite
<i>śaḥîp</i> <sup>267</sup>	siḥpu, overlay, cover (of	Ezek 41:16	Probable

<sup>258</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

<sup>259</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 125.

<sup>260</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

<sup>261</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel”; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 118.

<sup>262</sup> Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

<sup>263</sup> Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 126) writes that the phonetic differences make the relationship uncertain.

<sup>264</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 113; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati,” 166. Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17) notes that some commentators posit a loan from Akkadian *qurādu*, but this is based on emending the MT to *qrwdym*.

<sup>265</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 110-11.

<sup>266</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 130-31.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. 17, 133-34; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166.

	implements), type of wood		
<i>šā 't/ šē 'āt</i> <sup>268</sup>	<i>šātu</i> , to treat with scorn, show contempt for	Ezek 16:57; 25:6, 15; 28:24, 26; 36:5	Possible
<i>šāšar</i> <sup>269</sup>	<i>šaršerru</i> , red clay, paste, pigment	Ezek 23:14	N/A
<i>toknīt</i> <sup>270</sup>	<i>taknītu</i> , loving treatment, tender care	Ezek 28:12; 43:12	Definite
<i>tel 'ābīb</i> <sup>271</sup>	<i>til abūbi</i> , flood mound	Ezek 3:15	Definite
<i>tāpaš bēlēb</i> <sup>272</sup>	<i>ina libbi šabātu</i> , to take to heart, to take seriously	Ezek 14:5	Definite

## 2.1.2 Literature

Several scholars have noted that Ezekiel seems to have been familiar with Mesopotamian literary practices, indicating a far deeper cultural knowledge than vocabulary alone would suggest. Stökl argues that Ezekiel knew of cuneiform texts which would have been available only to students undergoing the most advanced stage of

<sup>268</sup> Garfinkel (“Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 132) states that the medial *aleph* means that the source of the Hebrew word is probably Aramaic, but the contexts in which this word is used in Akkadian fit the use in Ezekiel.

<sup>269</sup> Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, 149; Nissinen, “(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?” 94-95; Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 112; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 166. Stökl (“A Youth Without Blemish,” 243) notes that this word occurs in *ur<sub>5</sub>.ra – ħubullu* XI 316, making it a potential candidate for transfer through scribal training. In n. 70 he states that whilst Mankowski says it is a clear Babylonian loan, AHW (III, 1191) and Greenberg (*Ezekiel 21-37*, 479) derive it from Neo-Assyrian *šaššeru*.

<sup>270</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 135.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. 17, 136; Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv,” 165.

<sup>272</sup> Garfinkel, “Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel,” 17, 139.

Mesopotamian scribal training, such as those studying to be an *āšipu* exorcist.<sup>273</sup> There are several different genres from which Ezekiel may have borrowed, none of which had an obvious place in the type of quotidian contact between Babylonians and forced migrants documented in the administrative texts.

The first of these is incantations. Nancy Bowen showed that the structure of the judgement against female prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23 follows the structure of the Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft *Maqlû* incantations.<sup>274</sup> Yahweh's condemnation of the women parallels that of the gods Shamash and Girra in *Maqlû*. In both cases, the condemnation is followed by attempts to undo the "bad magic" the witches have enacted (Ezek 13:20-21) and the separation of the offenders from the community (albeit in ghost form in *Maqlû*).<sup>275</sup>

Some years before Bowen's work, Garfinkel noticed that other parts of Ezekiel resemble the incantations in *Maqlû* and other Mesopotamian corpora. For example, Yahweh's promise to protect Ezekiel from briers, thorns, and scorpions in Ezekiel 2:6 echoes the *Maqlû* incantation for protection against various evils including briers, thorns and scorpions (*Maqlû* III, 150-57; see Table II).<sup>276</sup> However, the themes of excising evildoers from the community and protecting against unpleasant natural elements are too

---

<sup>273</sup> Of the texts cited in this section, *Erra and Išum* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* belong to the canonical compositions belonging to Mesopotamian tradition between 750 and 539 BCE, whilst the most complete version of the *Maqlû* ritual dates to the 7th century BCE (Launderville, *Spirit and Reason*, 30-36).

<sup>274</sup> Nancy Bowen, "The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23," JBL 118/3 (1998), 417-433. For further discussion of this passage, see Section 4.1.2.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>276</sup> Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 58; "A Youth Without Blemish," 249; Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 140-49.



general to draw firm conclusions.<sup>277</sup> There are also significant differences between the structures of the two texts: most notably the lack of any actual witch-burning in the Ezekiel version (whereas “burning” is what the *Maqlû* incantations are named for).<sup>278</sup>

In the realm of mythology, Daniel Bodi finds twelve main parallels between the book of Ezekiel and the Akkadian work *Erra and Išum*.<sup>279</sup> One of these is the theme of the deity leaving his sanctuary and the chaos that ensues as a result. Yet Daniel Block found at least fourteen different Mesopotamian compositions that address this particular theme. The genres of Block’s texts include city laments, prophecies, and royal inscriptions, as well as mythological compositions like *Erra and Išum*.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, Block notes that the theme of divine abandonment is present in First Isaiah’s criticism of the “inviolability of Zion” tradition.<sup>281</sup> This means that Ezekiel could have encountered the motif in a number of places, including his native Judah.

---

<sup>277</sup> See Section 4.1.2 for a discussion of whether the women in Ezek 13:17-23 were conducting any kind of “magical” practice or sorcery at all.

<sup>278</sup> Not to mention, as Bowen herself points out (“The Daughters of Your People,” 421 n.19), that Ezek 13:17-23 is an oracle in the voice of the deity, whereas *Maqlû* is a collection of incantations addressed to the deity.

<sup>279</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 69-305. Two of these are the words *šā’î/šē’ât* and *hašmal*, listed above. Bodi divides the literary motifs into four which only occur in Ezekiel, and eight which occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as well as Ezekiel (but Ezekiel’s use is deemed to have been influenced by *Erra and Išum* specifically). Reviewers of the book saw the value in Bodi’s work, but were sceptical that it proved Ezekiel knew the text of *Erra and Išum* first-hand (Michael S. Moore, “Review: The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra, by Daniel Bodi,” JBL 112/3 (1993), 519-520; J.N. Postgate, “Review: D. Bodi, The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra,” VT 43/1 (1993), 137).

<sup>280</sup> Daniel Block, “Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel’s Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif,” in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000). John Kutsko (*Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000)) also discusses many of these. Additionally, he points out similarities between Ezekiel’s description of Yahweh’s return to and restoration of his sanctuary and Mesopotamian (especially Neo-Assyrian) accounts of kings returning divine statues taken in war to their original sanctuaries.

<sup>281</sup> Block, “Divine Abandonment,” 16-17.

Another example of Ezekiel's possible literary borrowing from the Babylonian corpus can be found in Winitzer's study of the similarities between Ezekiel 28 and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.<sup>282</sup> In particular, Winitzer draws comparisons between the Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 and Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, including their beautiful appearance, hubris, and downfall. Winitzer also suggests that there is a *gematria* cypher in Ezekiel 4:4-6. This claim relies on the Greek version of the passage, which has Ezekiel lying on his left side for 150 days (as opposed to the 390 of the MT) and on his right for 40. The number 150 corresponds to the numerical value of the cuneiform signs for "left" in Akkadian (*šumēlu*), whilst 40 corresponds to "right" (*imitta*) in the reciprocal system sometimes used in Mesopotamian esoteric texts.<sup>283</sup>

According to Stökl, the use of a *gematria* cypher shows that the writer of Ezekiel must have had access to Mesopotamian *niširtu*, secret knowledge, since something like this would not have been taught outside of a close, professional circle, and requires knowledge of Akkadian signs. This argument depends upon the originality of the Greek text as well as the use of the reciprocal numbering system rather than the regular system.<sup>284</sup> Since no other examples of *gematria* cyphers are apparent in Ezekiel, it is

---

<sup>282</sup> Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 179-99; Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 59; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 250.

<sup>283</sup> Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 171-72. The number 150 is arrived at through the numbers 2, 30: 2 represents 2x60 in the Mesopotamian sexagesimal system; when added to 30, the total is 150. The number 40 is achieved through the reciprocal of 150 with base 60 ( $1/150 \times 60$ ), which is 0.4, but would have been written the same way as 40 in Akkadian.

<sup>284</sup> Both of these are possible, but it is also possible that the number 150 was associated with the left side in Babylonian tradition due to the reasons cited above, and the Judeans learned of this tradition in a more casual way that did not require in-depth knowledge of cuneiform and numbering systems.

difficult to say for certain whether this would have been the writer's intention or what purpose it might have served, other than to display his superior knowledge of Akkadian.

A summary of all the Babylonian literary influences that have been posited for Ezekiel is laid out in the following table.

**Table II: Literary Motifs**

Literary Motif in Ezekiel	Mesopotamian Literary Motif	Reference
Vision of heaven and divine throne <sup>285</sup>	Mystical text about three heavens and three earths (KAR 307/ VAT 8917)	Ezek 1:22-28
Yahweh's promise of protection for Ezekiel against the "briers and thorns" and "scorpions" of those who oppose him <sup>286</sup>	<i>Maqlû</i> incantation for protection against various evils (including briers and thorns; scorpions) ( <i>Maqlû</i> III, 150-57)	Ezek 2:6
Ezekiel's dumbness and binding by the hand of Yahweh <sup>287</sup>	Mesopotamian incantations against demons that cause dumbness and paralysis (e.g. <i>Maqlû</i> VII, 71); descriptions of suffering in <i>Ludlul</i> ( <i>Ludlul</i> II, 75-98)	Ezek 3:22-27
<i>Gematria</i> ciphers of left (=150) and right (=40) relying on knowledge of cuneiform signs and their numerical values <sup>288</sup>	Esoteric texts using <i>gematria</i> cyphers (e.g. K2164+)	Ezek 4:4-8
Jerusalem as the centre of the world <sup>289</sup>	Babylon as the centre of the world in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 5:5; 38:12 (Judges 9:37)

<sup>285</sup> Kingsley, "Ezekiel by the Grand Canal;" Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 168-70.

<sup>286</sup> Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel," 140-49.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. 150-67.

<sup>288</sup> Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 170-75; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 250; Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 59.

<sup>289</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 219-30.

The six executioners and the scribe of Yahweh <sup>290</sup>	The <i>sebetti</i> in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 9
Yahweh's absence from his sanctuary <sup>291</sup>	Deities abandoning their temples before or because of a disaster, e.g. Marduk's absence from his statue and temple in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 9-11; 40-48
Judgement against female prophets <sup>292</sup>	<i>Maqlû</i> anti-witchcraft ritual	Ezek 13:17-23
The sword as a living being in the Song of the Sword <sup>293</sup>	Hypostatization of Erra's weapons, and of Išum as fire in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 21:1-17
Exhortation to recognize Yahweh <sup>294</sup>	Statement of recognition at end of <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 21:5; 39:21
The preservation of the city from flood <sup>295</sup>	The city of Sippar being spared from the Deluge in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 22:24
Contempt shown to Judah by surrounding nations at moment of exile, and by Ammonites to Yahweh's sanctuary <sup>296</sup>	Cultic offences and disrespect shown to Erra in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 25:4
The Prince of Tyre: his bodily perfection, paradisiac garden with precious stones guarded by	<i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> and the Akkadian tradition that Dilmun was Paradise (connection with Tyre in certain periods)	Ezek 28:1-19

---

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. 95-110.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. 183-218; Block, "Divine Abandonment;" John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 104-12.

<sup>292</sup> Nancy R. Bowen, "The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23," JBL 118/3 (1998), 417-33 (420-22); Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?" 94; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 249; Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 58; Nevader, "On Reading Ezekiel by the Waters of Babylon," 108.

<sup>293</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 231-57.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 297-305.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 111-16; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 248.

<sup>296</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 69-81.

a cherub, and inevitable downfall and death <sup>297</sup>		
Yahweh battling the Pharaoh, symbolized as a <i>tannîn</i> / lion <sup>298</sup>	Tishpak battling a lion/ dragon <i>Mischwesen</i> (CT 13.33-34)	Ezek 32:1-16
Ezekiel as watchman over Yahweh's wrath <sup>299</sup>	Ishum as watchman over Erra's wrath in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 33:1-6
Restored and fertile land of Israel with river flowing from Temple <sup>300</sup>	Oracle of bliss describing Tigris and Euphrates restoring fertility of land in <i>Erra and Išum</i>	Ezek 40-48

Despite these numerous similarities, it is unlikely that Ezekiel received a high level of cuneiform scribal training. The examples discussed above reveal how many of the literary themes and structures put forward as evidence of Ezekiel's direct borrowing from Akkadian texts are far from conclusive in that regard. Additionally, there are no extant cuneiform documents from sixth-century BCE Babylonia written by Judeans.<sup>301</sup> Rather,

---

<sup>297</sup> Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv," 179-99; Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?" 94; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 250; Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 59-60; Nevader, "On Reading Ezekiel by the Waters of Babylon," 104-106.

<sup>298</sup> Theodore J. Lewis, "CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths," JAOS 116/1 (1996) 28-47.

<sup>299</sup> Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 258-77.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. 278-96.; Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 234. Bodi argues that the image of the double current flowing from the Temple with trees of healing on the riverbanks resembles the wall relief of the investiture of the King of Mari with two streams, as well as wall reliefs on the Ishtar Temple at Uruk. However, Stökl points out that there are similarities with the Etemenanki in Babylon as well, providing a contemporary example.

<sup>301</sup> Stökl, "A Youth Without Blemish," 226; Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 50. There is one example of a scribe with the Hebrew name Šemaya in a Neo-Assyrian mystical text from Ashur (Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, SAA 3 [Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989], xxiv-xxv). Additionally, Stökl notes that there is a Judean in the CUSAS 28 texts named Yahū-šar-ušur, whose name is once spelled Bēl-šarra-ušur, which may suggest that non-Babylonians sometimes took Babylonian *Beamtennamen*, obscuring their ethnicity. Daniel 1:3-4 claims that some Judeans underwent scribal training, but there is no evidence that this was really the case during the Neo-Babylonian period (or that it refers to cuneiform rather than alphabetic training). Kathleen Abraham ("West Semitic and Judean Brides,"

the evidence reveals that cuneiform and alphabetic scribes were trained separately: their roles did not overlap. Three Judean alphabetic scribes (*sēpirus*) appear in documents which indicate they served in the state administration in the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE.<sup>302</sup> Although they would not have been trained to write in cuneiform, they may have had sufficient contact with cuneiform scribes to learn some of their traditions.<sup>303</sup>

When the socio-historic context of the book of Ezekiel is fully examined, the theory that its author may have had access to higher levels of Babylonian literature and learning is difficult to support. Caroline Waerzeggers is the only scholar to date who has studied supposed Judean textual borrowing of Babylonian literary traditions in light of the social interactions between the two groups. She uses a network analysis model to investigate the claim (made by Mario Liverani and others) that the books of Kings were influenced by the Babylonian Chronicle.<sup>304</sup> Carly Crouch conducted a similar enquiry into the supposed relationship between parts of Deuteronomy and the Neo-Assyrian Esarhaddon Succession Treaty.<sup>305</sup> Both scholars make the same critical point: in order for a relationship between

---

206, 215) notes that the scribe of a cuneiform marriage document discovered at Āl-Yāhūdu bore a West-Semitic name, Adad-šamā, but the theophoric element “Adad” suggests he was Aramean, not Judean.

<sup>302</sup> Bloch, *Alphabetic Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform*, 379-80. Only one of these served during the Neo-Babylonian period. Bloch notes that the vast majority of *sēpirus* had Babylonian names, which is not to say they were necessarily of Babylonian ethnicity (Ibid., 24). Zadok found that Judean *sēpirus* were well-attested in the Murašû archive, making up 33-53% of the profession (*The Jews in Babylonia*, 69-71), but these numbers are not reflective of the general situation in Babylonia (Bloch, *Alphabetic Scribes*, 24-25).

<sup>303</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 106-107.

<sup>304</sup> Caroline Waerzeggers, “Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts,” in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, ed. Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 131-146.

<sup>305</sup> Carly Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, and the Nature of Subversion* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

a biblical and a cuneiform text to be credible, the social structures whereby Judean writers could have accessed that text must be demonstrably plausible. Too often, this step is overlooked in scholarly enthusiasm to point out literary similarities.

In Waerzeggers's work, she studies the socio-cultural context of the archives in which the Babylonian Chronicle has been found in order to determine whether Judeans would have been able to access them. It is unlikely that anything close to a complete record of texts survives from sixth-century BCE Babylonia. Yet the documents that have been recovered reveal important information about the environments in which they circulated. Waerzeggers concludes that the Judean-Babylonian encounters which took place in Babylonia during the sixth century BCE and onwards occurred only in specific social settings. Whilst there was a good deal of interaction in the realms of business, legal affairs, and even some marriages, none is documented, for example, in the Babylonian priestly archives, except for the few Judeans who appear there in the role of tax collectors.<sup>306</sup> This suggests that the Judean exiles typically lived at some remove from local priestly families. Although there is evidence of traders who connected them, it is unlikely that first-hand contact with the Babylonian Chronicle would have occurred in this way. Therefore, the available evidence suggests that the Judean population did not have direct access to these texts, let alone more closely-guarded Babylonian literary and ritual works.<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> Waerzeggers, "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile," 142.

<sup>307</sup> Johannes Hackl's study of the scribal practices of the CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6 texts has revealed that the Babylonian scribes who wrote these texts made frequent errors and used forms and structures that departed from the norms governing legal records. He concludes that they were probably trained to a fairly low level in Nippur before being employed in villages and the countryside to draw up simple legal documents (Johannes Hackl, "Babylonian Scribal Practices in Rural Contexts: A Linguistic Survey of Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia (CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6)" in *Wandering Arameans*:

Rather, Ezekiel's writing is strongly suggestive of a Judean, priestly scribal training. His vocabulary and themes bear many similarities to the Priestly writings of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>308</sup> Here, too, evidence of a direct literary connection between the two works is elusive. Yet the social context for the connection is at least clear: the writer of Ezekiel claims to have been a priest in Jerusalem before his forced migration to Babylonia (Ezek 1:3). Therefore, it is much more likely that he received his scribal training in a Judean religious context than in a Babylonian one.<sup>309</sup>

Nevertheless, the text of Ezekiel demonstrates that Ezekiel and his community had enough contact with Babylonians to be familiar with many Babylonian words, idioms, and literary references. The data outlined above, combined with the picture provided by the CUSAS 28 documents, suggest that there was a high level of Judean integration into Neo-Babylonian society. However, an analysis of the non-textual Babylonian influences in Ezekiel reveals a more complex situation.

## **2.2 Babylon: Non-Textual Influences**

It is easy to understand why many see Ezekiel's openness towards Babylonian traditions as evidence of his openness towards Babylon itself. In addition to the large number of Babylonian textual influences on the book of Ezekiel, Babylon is portrayed

---

*Arameans Outside Syria, Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle, LAS 5 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017], 125-40 [138]). This suggests that the Babylonian scribes with whom the forced migrant Judeans most frequently had contact in the late-sixth and fifth centuries BCE were not those who could write complex literary and ritual texts, let alone teach them to others.

<sup>308</sup> For further discussion, see the introduction to Chapter Three.

<sup>309</sup> Menahem Haran, "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," VT 58 (2008), 211-18 (217).



favourably as Yahweh's instrument in Ezekiel 17,<sup>310</sup> and never appears as the target of one of the oracles against the nations in Ezekiel 25-32. Most scholars conclude that Ezekiel makes use of Babylonian traditions primarily in order to shame the Judeans into realizing that the Babylonian defeat of Judah was punishment for their own wrongdoing. David Vanderhooft summarizes this view when he writes: "Babylonian realia and ways of thought are to Ezekiel like Babylon's armies are to God: they are means for assaulting wayward Judeans."<sup>311</sup>

It is evident that Ezekiel had no qualms about borrowing Babylonian words and literary motifs. However, he may have conceived of other practices as ethnic boundary markers which exposed Babylonians as "the other." Language and literature do not encompass all aspects of culture, yet far less scholarship examines other forms of collective identity expression in Ezekiel. The adoption of an imperial language or writing system is sometimes prudent or even necessary for forced migrants. It does not necessarily equate to assimilation or even integration with the host community.

There are several explicit indications that Ezekiel was intent on creating and maintaining the ethnic boundaries between his community and its Babylonian neighbours. One of the most powerful examples occurs in Ezekiel 4:13, which states that the bread eaten by the people of Israel in forced migration will be unclean (*tāmē*) by virtue of being in "the nations where [Yahweh] will banish [the exiles]." *Tāmē* is term with different connotations to *tô'ēbā*, which Carly Crouch has shown is used by biblical

---

<sup>310</sup> Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel in and on Babylon," 119.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 105.

authors to evoke the disgust emotion so effective in creating boundaries with others.<sup>312</sup>

Yet *tāmē*’ indicates ritual impurity, which is even more serious, especially in the Priestly tradition.<sup>313</sup> The comparison between bread eaten in Babylonia and food cooked over human faeces (4:12) arouses disgust, but also Ezekiel’s fear of defilement in a foreign setting.<sup>314</sup>

The socio-historical context must be kept in mind as non-textual forms of identity expression in Ezekiel are considered. For example, Ezekiel’s location within Babylonia and status as a forced migrant may have prevented him from openly accusing Babylon of wrongdoing as he does the other foreign nations.<sup>315</sup> In what follows, I discuss the non-textual Babylonian influences that occur in Ezekiel, beginning with iconography (Section 2.2.1) and then moving on to modifications and practices of the body, including clothing (2.2.2), military practices (2.2.3), and religious practices (2.2.4).

When Ezekiel’s descriptions of these social practices are examined in light of contemporary evidence, it becomes clear that his acceptance of Babylonian customs is not as great as his language may suggest. Most of the bodily modifications and practices Ezekiel evokes are symbols of the Babylonians’ foreignness and imperial power, but do not accurately reflect their historical practices. Ezekiel’s primary intention is to create a foreign-sounding stereotype of Babylonian culture. He presents a definitive interpretation

---

<sup>312</sup> Crouch, “What Makes a Thing Abominable?” 521-22. For

<sup>313</sup> Jacob Milgrom, “Two Biblical Hebrew Priestly Terms: *šeqeš* and *tāmē*’,” *Maarav* 8 (1992), 107-16 (108). Milgrom describes the difference between *tô ‘ēbā* and *tāmē*’ as the difference between aesthetic and cultic concerns (114).

<sup>314</sup> Daniel Smith notes that it is common for forced migrant groups to express their concern regarding pollution from foreign elements (*The Religion of the Landless*, 11).

<sup>315</sup> Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 2.

of the social relationship between the Judean forced migrants and the Babylonian conquerors: one which strengthens the ethnic boundaries between them.

### 2.2.1 Iconography

Like language, a shared iconographic repertoire between communities can be indicative of their social relationship. As early as the mid-nineteenth century CE, scholars noted parallels between Ezekiel's vivid descriptions of his visions and Mesopotamian depictions of cherubs and *Mischwesen*.<sup>316</sup> Othmar Keel carried out the first comprehensive study of the visions in Ezekiel 1 and 10, finding many parallels with Mesopotamian imagery. For example, he saw Ezekiel's description of Yahweh on a cherub (10:4) as reminiscent of Mesopotamian images of gods on lions, bulls, and *Mischwesen*.<sup>317</sup> Meanwhile, the living creatures with their four different faces and wings in Ezekiel 1:5-26 resemble the "bearers of heaven," which Mesopotamian art historical tradition commonly depicts holding up the celestial firmament. Above this, the deity is often shown with a clear upper body and fiery lower body, much like Ezekiel's description of Yahweh.<sup>318</sup>

Christoph Uehlinger and Susanne Trufaut also studied Ezekiel 1 and 10, concluding that only Chapter 1 reflects sixth-century BCE Babylonian cosmology, whilst Chapter 10

---

<sup>316</sup> E.g. In 1848 Austin Henry Layard suggested that statues like the winged, human-headed lions he excavated at Nineveh may have influenced Ezekiel's descriptions of the heavenly creatures in Ezek 1:5-11; 10:2-14 (A.H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, Vol. I [London: J. Murray, 1849], 69-70). Bodi (*The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 42-45) contains a history of the scholarship concerning the potential iconographic influences on Ezekiel up to 1991.

<sup>317</sup> Othmar Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst: Eine neue Deutung der Majestätschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4*, SBS 84/85 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), 271.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

was a later addition from second-century BCE Palestine. They suggest that the images in Ezekiel 1 have their closest parallels in later Assyrian and early Achaemenid glyptic iconography from Mesopotamia, such as the *kusarrikū* bull-men supporting Shamash's abode or the wheels used as divine astral symbols. Since these traditions are more contemporary with the Judean forced migrations than the "bearers of heaven" iconography that Keel evokes, they provide a potentially better source for the imagery which influenced Ezekiel's work.<sup>319</sup> However, the dates of the traditions Uehlinger and Trufaut cite still range from the Assyrian to the Achaemenid period, revealing the prevalence of such iconography. It cannot be proven whether Ezekiel became familiar with this iconography in sixth-century BCE Babylonia, or whether it was more generally known in Judah due to their long-term contact with the Neo-Assyrian empire. Since the CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6 documents reveal that the Judeans only had contact with the most basically-trained of cuneiform scribes in the hinterlands of Nippur, it is possible that their contact with glyptic art was limited as well.<sup>320</sup>

Shawn Aster examines both textual and art-historical traditions in an attempt to secure the origins of one of Ezekiel's key visual themes. Aster suggests Ezekiel combined the Judean Priestly tradition of the *kēbôd-Yahweh* with the Neo-Assyrian concept of *melammu*, which was still current in the Neo-Babylonian period. The Neo-Assyrians expressed their ideology concerning the great power of their god Ashur and his

---

<sup>319</sup> Christoph Uehlinger and Susanne Müller Trufaut, "Ezekiel I, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement," TZ 57 (2001), 140-71 (153-56).

<sup>320</sup> See n.308, p. 91.

chosen king on palace wall reliefs, to which vassals were intentionally exposed.<sup>321</sup> They depicted the god in a sun disc (sometimes surrounded by extra radiance rings and fire) helping the king, which corresponded to royal inscriptions using the term *melammu*. This word retained its meaning of insuperable power into the sixth century BCE, and the winged sun disc iconography continued to be used in conjunction with the Neo-Babylonian kings.<sup>322</sup> Aster suggests that Ezekiel adopted the *melammu* imagery to show that Yahweh was in full force when he left the Temple; it was a choice and not a sign of weakness (see Section 3.2.2 for further discussion).<sup>323</sup>

Table III contains a summary of all the Mesopotamian iconographical influences which scholars have observed in the book of Ezekiel. The images Ezekiel evokes may indicate some familiarity with Mesopotamian iconography, but the evidence presented could be explained by a fairly casual acquaintance with the material. A glimpse of a Babylonian official's cylinder seal or someone else's description of the impressive wall reliefs of the Assyrians may have been sufficient to inspire Ezekiel's own descriptions of *Mischwesen* and the deity. There is not sufficient evidence of borrowing to indicate

---

<sup>321</sup> Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *melammu*," 15 (cf. Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming]). Theodore J. Lewis ("You Have Heard What the Kings of Assyria Have Done: Disarmament Passages vis-à-vis Assyrian Rhetoric of Intimidation," in *Isaiah's Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008], 75-100 [85-87]) documents the evidence that Neo-Assyrian kings intentionally displayed their military victories to their vassals. For example, in the Banquet Text of Ashur-nasirpal II the Assyrian king invites delegates from his vassal states (including those in the Levant) to see his palace at Nimrud and the wall reliefs displayed therein.

<sup>322</sup> The god in the winged sun disc is usually associated with Shamash, the sun god, in the Neo-Babylonian period. It appears in reliefs commissioned by Nabonidus in particular (e.g. the as-Sila' relief, described in Bradley L. Crowell, "Nabonidus, as-Sila' and the Beginning of the End of Edom," *BASOR* 348 [2007], 75-88 [81]), as well as in images with King Shapur II during the 4th century BCE. Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *melammu*," 18-19.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. 19.

Ezekiel's immersion in Neo-Babylonian visual culture.

**Table III: Iconography**

Ezekiel's Image	Mesopotamian Image	Reference
<i>kēbôd Yhwh</i> <sup>324</sup>	Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian images of sun disk/ Ashur's <i>melammu</i> and inscriptions relating this to the god and/or king's power in war	Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:23; 43:2, 4; 44:4
The four <i>ḥayyôt</i> , the heavenly firmament, and the throne <sup>325</sup>	"Bearers of heaven"/ <i>kusarikku</i> genies supporting heavenly firmament on Neo-Assyrian seals	Ezek 1
The <i>'opannîm</i> <sup>326</sup>	Wheels as divine astral symbols on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals; wheels below winged disks and gods in lunar circles on Achaemenid cylinder seals; circular movements of celestial bodies and/or zodiacal signs in Babylonian astronomy	Ezek 1; 10
The <i>kēbôd Yhwh</i> on a cherub <sup>327</sup>	Mesopotamian images of gods on lions, bulls, or <i>Mischwesen</i>	Ezek 10

### 2.2.2 Clothing

Clothing and adornment are aspects of visual culture which in the ancient world are

<sup>324</sup> Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?" 93-94; Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian Melammu," 10-21.

<sup>325</sup> Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*, 271; Uehlinger and Trufaut, "Ezekiel I, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 153.

<sup>326</sup> Uehlinger and Trufaut, "Ezekiel I, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 155-64.

<sup>327</sup> Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*, 271-72.

closely connected to iconography. Due to its constitution from organic materials, clothing from the ancient world rarely survives. Therefore, much of our knowledge concerning what ancient peoples wore is based on textual descriptions and the art historical record. Clothing and adornment are especially effective ways of communicating ethnic, class, gender, and professional identities, among others. Their proximity to the body means they are often inextricably linked to the individual bearing them in the mind of the perceiver. Ronald Schwarz, an anthropologist who studies practices of dress, stated that an individual's clothing both communicates information about them and, through its physical and psychological effects, moves them to act in a certain way. He summarizes: "In dressing up, man addresses himself, his fellows, and his world."<sup>328</sup>

Yet the meaning of any given clothing or adornment practice can only clearly be communicated in the context of social relationships within the community.<sup>329</sup> It only reveals information about the individual's personal identity because of their social identity. As Terence Turner puts it, the surface of the body is "the frontier of society...[it] becomes the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialisation is enacted, and bodily adornment (in all its culturally multifarious forms, from body-painting to clothing and from feather head-dresses to cosmetics) becomes the language through which it is expressed."<sup>330</sup> During times of rapid change, like a forced migration, the individual's

---

<sup>328</sup> Ronald A. Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice: Toward an Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment," in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 23-45 (31).

<sup>329</sup> Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne Bubolz Eicher, "The Language of Personal Adornment," in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 7-21 (7).

<sup>330</sup> Terence S. Turner, "The Social Skin," in *Not Work Alone*, ed. J. Cherfas and R. Lewin (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980), 112-40 (112).

approach to dress is apt to reflect the social upheaval which is occurring.<sup>331</sup> Habits which went unquestioned before may suddenly be brought to people's attention.

When Ezekiel describes Babylonians and Assyrians, he usually does so in terms of their military prowess (Section 2.2.3). Yet in Ezekiel 23:5-15, he goes into more detail, allowing us a glimpse of how he views some of the clothing practices of Babylonians and Assyrians. The context of these verses is an extended metaphor in which Samaria and Jerusalem (portrayed by the fictional sisters Oholah and Oholibah) forge alliances with other nations at the expense of their relationship with Yahweh. The men in the narrative act as metonyms for their respective nations, and are unlikely to represent specific historical figures; likewise, the descriptions of their clothing are not necessarily intended to be historically accurate. However, the writer of Ezekiel chose specific terms to communicate information about the characters portrayed. Examining these terms in their historical context reveals why they may have been chosen for the best rhetorical effect.

Verses 14-15 deal with the Babylonians in particular:

וַתֹּסֶף אֶל־תַּזְנוּנוֹתֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא אֲנָשִׁי מִחֻקָּה עַל־הַקִּיר צִלְמֵי כַשְׂדִּיִּים [כַּשְׂדִּים] חֲקֻקִּים בְּשֵׁשׁ: חֲגוּרֵי אָזוּר בְּמִתְנִיָּהֶם  
סְרוּחֵי טְבוּלִים בְּרֹאשֵׁיהֶם מִרְאֵה שְׁלֵשִׁים כָּלָם דְּמוּת בְּנֵי־בָבֶל כַּשְׂדִּים אֶרֶץ מוֹלְדָתָם:

She added to her debaucheries: she saw men carved upon the wall; images of Chaldeans carved in red paste, girded with a loincloth at their waists, trailing turbans on their heads; all of them looking like officers, the image of Babylonians whose birthplace was Chaldea (Ezek 23:14-15).

Here, Oholibah lusts after the Chaldeans, the ruling ethnic group of the Neo-Babylonian empire.<sup>332</sup> She sees only images of the men, but these are enough to pique her interest.

---

<sup>331</sup> Roach and Eicher, "The Language of Personal Adornment," 11.

<sup>332</sup> Johannes Hackl, Michael Jursa, and Martina Schmidl have suggested that northern Babylonians (such as those from Sippar) may have used the term "Dakurean" (*mār-Dakūru*) to refer to the Chaldean ruling class,



Their pictures are “carved on the wall” (*mēḥuqqeh ‘al haqqîr*) in red. The reader is immediately reminded of the creatures and idols *mēḥuqqeh ‘al haqqîr* of the Jerusalem Temple in Ezekiel 8:10: perhaps these images included human figures. Alternatively, Margaret Odell suggests that since the images of Babylonians entice Jerusalem while she is still involved with Assyria, the reference is most likely to Babylonian enemies depicted in Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs.<sup>333</sup> The colour red is well-attested in these reliefs, so it is possible that Ezekiel received his inspiration here.<sup>334</sup>

However, the use of the term *šāšar* for “red” in Ezekiel 23:14 is intriguing: it is a loanword from the Babylonian *šaršerru*, a red clay or paste that often had an apotropaic function in Mesopotamian rituals.<sup>335</sup> It could also be used to paint figurines,<sup>336</sup> in

---

probably with negative connotations, emphasizing their southern origins (CT 22, 222 in Johannes Hackl, Michael Jursa, and Martina Schmidl, “Spätbabylonische Privatbriefe,” in *Spätbabylonische Briefe*, ed. Michael Jursa (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), Band 1 [323-34]). Bit-Dakkuri was one of the three largest Chaldean tribes and was situated south of Babylon between Borsippa and Marad. Its origins are murky, but most likely Aramean. (Beaulieu, *A History of Babylon*, 173-76). By naming the Chaldeans in particular, Ezekiel may similarly have been targeting the ruling ethnic group.

<sup>333</sup> Margaret S. Odell, “Ezekiel Saw What He Said He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 162-76 (172).

<sup>334</sup> If Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs are what Ezekiel has in mind here, it would explain why he mentions both carving and red paste, since the carved orthostat reliefs of the Assyrians were originally painted in bright colours.

<sup>335</sup> Some Assyriologists claim that Neo-Assyrian vassals were prohibited from smearing *šaršerru* on their face, hands, or bodies in order to dissolve their oath in the Esarhaddon Succession Treaty, reconstructing: *summa [šar]-še-rum . . . lu panīkunu lu qātēkunu lu napultakunu tapaššašani* for EST 373-74, CAD š II, 124. Yet Jacob Lauinger points out that a few lines later (Line 376), the broken word is also prohibited from being bound (*rakāsu*) in the swearers’ laps, making *šaršerru* an unlikely candidate (Jacob Lauinger, “Neo-Assyrian Scribes, ‘Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty,’ and the Dynamics of Textual Mass Production,” in *Texts and Contexts: The Circulation and Transmission of Cuneiform Texts in Social Space*, ed. Paul Delnero and Jacob Lauinger [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015] 285-314 [309, n.33]).

<sup>336</sup> For example, KAR 227 (I 25) instructs:  
 IGI.MEŠ-šu IM.SA<sub>5</sub> ŠĒŠ ina IGI ZAG-šú  
 “You shall anoint [the figurine’s] eyes with *šeršerru* on its right.”

pharmaceutical concoctions to heal the sick, or smeared onto houses to protect them from sorcery.<sup>337</sup> This last use is particularly significant considering that the only other time the word appears in the Hebrew Bible is Jeremiah 22:14, where the prophet criticizes the wealthy for building large houses and smearing their walls with *šāšar*:

הָאָמֵר אֲבִנָּה-לִי בַּיִת מְדוֹת וְעֲלִיּוֹת מְרֻחָּתִים וְקָרַע לוֹ חֲלוּנֵי וְסָפֹן בָּאֶרֶז וּמִשׁוֹם בְּשִׁשָּׁר

The one who says, “Let me build for myself a wide house and airy upper rooms:” he removes windows for himself, and it is paneled with cedar and anointed with red paste (Jer 22:14).

Although the primary concern of this passage is the abuse of the poor, some lines earlier the same wealthy Judeans are accused of worshipping foreign gods. It is possible that the writer of Jeremiah recognized the practice of smearing *šāšar* as a foreign religious ritual, and connected it to the adoption of other Mesopotamian religious traditions by Judean elites.

The only other similar use of a red paste in biblical literature occurs in Wisdom 13:14, in a parody of divine statue-making:

καταχρίσας μίλτω καὶ φύκει ἐρυθθῆνας χροᾶν αὐτοῦ,  
καὶ πᾶσαν κηλῖδα τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ καταχρίσας

Giving it a coat of red paint and coloring its surface red  
and covering every blemish in it with paint (Wisd 13:14).

It appears that the writer of the apocryphal book of Wisdom knew about the significance accorded to *šaršerru* in Mesopotamian tradition. Here, the craftsman forms the wooden

---

Although the word for the red paste here is a logogram from Sumerian (IM.SA<sub>5</sub>), it is the one which corresponds to the Akkadian word *šeršerru* on the lexical lists Hh. XI 314; Nabnitu XXIII 229; Köcher Pflanzenkunde 12 vi 24 (= Köcher Uruanna III 550); and BRM 4 32:16.

<sup>337</sup> CAD § II.

image into the likeness of a human or animal before coating it in *miltō*, the same word used in the Greek version of Jeremiah 22:14 where the MT has *šaršerru*.<sup>338</sup>

As for what the Babylonians in red were wearing, verse 15 tells us they had an *'ēzôr* around their waists and *sērûhê tēbûlîm* on their heads. The word *'ēzôr* simply means “a girding” and usually refers to the flax garment worn by men under their cloaks (if they had them) and secured with a leather or cloth belt around the waist.<sup>339</sup> Isaiah 5:27 describes the securely-fastened *'ēzôr* of the Neo-Assyrian soldier, demonstrating that Mesopotamian soldiers wore a garment which biblical writers recognized as an *'ēzôr*. Since there are very few extant images of Chaldeans, it is difficult to know exactly what was meant by the term in this context. The stela of Marduk-apla-iddina, the Chaldean king who sought alliance with Hezekiah in the late eighth century BCE, shows him wearing a long robe tied with a sash around the waist (Fig. 3). Likewise, the sixth-century BCE stela of Nabonidus shows a fainter, but apparently decorated, sash around his waist (Fig. 4). Though fashions may have changed in the century or so that followed, it is possible that this is the kind of belted garment that the writer of Ezekiel had in mind.

The *sērûhê tēbûlîm* are more difficult to interpret. The verbal root of the word *sārûah*

---

<sup>338</sup> The use of red-coloured substances for spiritual protection had a much broader background in Israel. Scott Noegel suggests this was due to the perceived life-giving properties of blood. Blood itself occasionally had an apotropaic function, such as the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on doorposts to ward off the death of the firstborn in Exodus 12. Other red objects could also have protective or restorative functions, such as the red threads which Tamar and Rahab tied to protect their family members, or the scarlet wool used to remove red-coloured skin disease and mould in Leviticus through sympathetic magic (Gen 38:28-30; Josh 2:21; Lev 14:4-6; Scott B. Noegel, “Scarlet and Harlots: Seeing Red in the Hebrew Bible,” *HUCA* 87 [2016] 1-47 [25-26]). Because of this special power attributed to red things, they were dangerous if used without caution. Perhaps for this reason, red was also the primary colour symbolizing impurity in the Hebrew Bible (Athalya Brenner, “On Color and the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Language of Color in the Mediterranean: An Anthology of Linguistic and Ethnographic Aspects of Color Terms*, ed. Alexander Borg [Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1999], 200-207 [202]).

<sup>339</sup> Douglas R. Edwards, “Dress and Ornamentation,” in *ABD* II 232-38 (233-34).

means “to hang over” or “grow profusely.” The word *ṭēbûlîm* is a *hapax* with no cognates, except potentially the Ethiopic verb *tablala* meaning “to wrap up.”<sup>340</sup> For this reason, *sārûah* was probably included as a gloss for the unusual term *ṭēbûlîm*. These are not the same “turbans” that Ezekiel and the Judean priesthood are said to wear in 24:17 and 44:17 (as well as the Aaronid priesthood in Exodus 39:28), since the term for those is *pē’ēr*. Nor are they the same as the “turban” (*miṣnepet*) that the Judean prince wears in 21:26.

In his study on Assyrian and Babylonian headwear, Julian Reade found that by the ninth century BCE, the Babylonian royalty had settled on a conical cap, often with a “heavy ribbon” falling from it (which would explain the inclusion of *sārûah*).<sup>341</sup> This headwear is evident in the stele of Marduk-apla-iddina (Fig. 3). A wall panel from Ashurbanipal’s palace at Nineveh (Fig. 5) reveals that this type of crown was still recognizably Babylonian by the 7th century BCE. An Assyrian soldier, having successfully fought against Babylon, carries such a hat in his hands as a war trophy. It was clearly distinguished from the Assyrian royal headwear of the time, which was a fez with a conical top (Fig. 6).<sup>342</sup>

Thus, Ezekiel evokes the Babylonians’ ethnicity and high social class through his description of their headwear. The Chaldeans are instantly recognizable for who they are:

---

<sup>340</sup> HALOT, 368.

<sup>341</sup> Julian Reade, “Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet: Power-Dressing at the Assyrian Court,” in *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*, ed. Mikko Luukko, Saana Svärd, and Raija Mattila (Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society, 2009) 239-64 (247-48). Bradley Crowell describes the image of Nabonidus on the as-Sila’ relief as wearing a conical crown “unlike the Assyrian flat-topped crown” (Crowell, “Nabonidus,” 81).

<sup>342</sup> Reade, “Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet,” 248.

wealthy, powerful representatives of their nations. There is little evidence pertaining to what the Judean exiles would have worn by contrast. No artefactual remains of their clothing have been discovered. The Lachish reliefs are the only extant depictions of Judean prisoners of war, and they predate the Babylonian exile by a little over a century. In these images, the Judean men are barefoot and wear plain, mid-calf-length, short-sleeved garments, and some have hats with earflaps (Figs. 5-6).<sup>343</sup>

These images were created with a particular purpose in mind, and do not necessarily



Fig. 3  
Stela of Marduk-apla-iddina  
VA 02663<sup>344</sup>

---

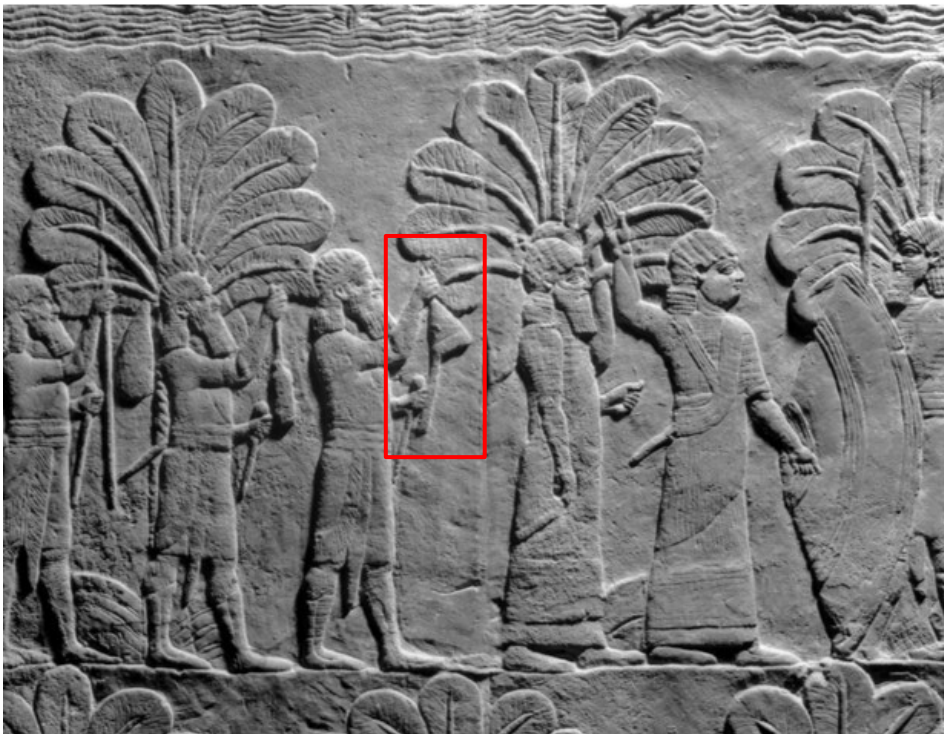
<sup>343</sup> Abigail S. Limmer, “Dress: Bronze and Iron Age,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*, ed. Daniel M. Master (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 318-28 (324-25).

<sup>344</sup> Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VA 02663 (<http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus>)



Fig. 4  
Stela of Nabonidus  
BM 90837<sup>345</sup>

Fig. 5  
Assyrian soldiers carry a royal hat looted from Babylon.  
Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Nineveh. BM 124945-6<sup>346</sup>



<sup>345</sup> British Museum, BM 90837

([https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?assetId=338371003&objectId=367113&partId=1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=338371003&objectId=367113&partId=1))

<sup>346</sup> Reade, "Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet," 247 (Fig. 10, British Museum photograph).



Fig. 6  
Ashurbanipal wearing a royal fez.  
Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Nineveh.  
BM 124867<sup>347</sup>

have a basis in reality.<sup>348</sup> The destitution of the residents of Lachish as they left their home town was probably exaggerated to discourage other Assyrian vassals from rebelling.<sup>349</sup> However, the Assyrian artists who carved these reliefs did take care to express the captives' ethnicity, as other conquered peoples are depicted wearing different clothes and carrying different items. For example, Ashurbanipal's wall relief depicting his siege of Thebes shows the Egyptian captives to be bald-headed, wearing only knee-length kilts with bare chests.<sup>350</sup>

---

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 256 (Fig. 16, British Museum photograph).

<sup>348</sup> Brian A. Brown, "Culture on Display: Representations of Ethnicity in the Art of the Late Assyrian Empire," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014) 515-42 (537).

<sup>349</sup> Limmer, "Dress," 325.

<sup>350</sup> Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, 462. Likewise, Ashurbanipal's wall reliefs depicting Babylonian prisoners of war (BM 124788) and Sennacherib's wall reliefs depicting captives from Iran or eastern Turkey (BM 124902) both depict these people groups bearing unique markers of their ethnicity.



Additionally, Ezekiel provides detailed descriptions of the Babylonians' thorough destruction of Jerusalem, even though he does not claim to witness it in person. He states that the wealthy residents of the city will be clothed in sackcloth with bald heads (7:18), and the prince will have to remove his crown (21:26). Again, these descriptions were written with a persuasive purpose in mind and do not necessarily reflect a real situation. Yet Ezekiel and his fellow Judeans in exile had first-hand experience of siege and forced migration in 597 BCE, and could well imagine what another Babylonian attack would look like. Even if elite Judeans were treated relatively well, as it appears King Jehoiachin was, the majority of their countrymen were committed to forced labour in the backwaters of the Babylonian empire.<sup>351</sup>



Figs. 7-8  
Judean prisoners of war from Lachish.  
Details from the wall reliefs in the  
Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at  
Nineveh.  
Left (Fig. 7): BM 124911<sup>352</sup>  
Below (Fig. 8): BM 124908-9<sup>353</sup>

<sup>351</sup> Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migration*, 84.

<sup>352</sup> British Museum, BM 124911  
([https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=321068001&objectid=366876](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=321068001&objectid=366876))

<sup>353</sup> British Museum, BM 124908-9 (photograph by author).





When considered as part of the social context of the Judean exiles in Babylonia, the descriptions of the Chaldeans in Ezekiel 23 are very informative. Much like the Babylonian language and literary motifs other scholars have observed, they reveal Ezekiel's detailed knowledge of Babylonian customs. That Ezekiel knows what the headwear of the Chaldean rulers looked like suggests a familiarity with these people groups and their customs. The way he stereotypes the Babylonians according to their clothing reveals their easily-recognizable differences from Judeans and other people groups. Ezekiel's description of the headwear of royalty evokes Babylonian imperial control over Judah and its resources. There is also a hint of religious deviance in Ezekiel's descriptions of the outsiders. The images carved on the wall and the *šāšar* paste connected with foreign rituals would have signalled danger for someone with a Priestly level of concern for purity like Ezekiel.

### 2.2.3 Military Practices

Another important aspect of the Babylonians' identity is conveyed in Ezekiel 23: their military prowess. The way Ezekiel categorizes the military personnel using Akkadian terminology reveals his familiarity with how the Assyrian and Babylonian elite were organized. The two are treated together in Ezekiel 23:23-26:

בְּנֵי בָבֶל וְכָל־כַּשְׂדִּים פְּקוֹד וְשׁוּעַ וְקוּעַ כָּל־בְּנֵי אַשּׁוּר אוֹתָם בַּחוּרֵי חֶמֶד וּסְגָנִים כָּל־שְׁלֹשִׁים וּקְרוּאִים  
רֹכְבֵי סוּסִים כָּל־ם: וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ הֶצֶן רֶכֶב וְגִלְגָל וּבִקְהֵל עַמִּים צָנָה וּמִגֶּן וְקוֹבֵעַ יְשִׁימוּ עָלֶיךָ סָבִיב ...  
וְנָתַתִּי קִנְאָתִי בָּךְ וְעָשׂוּ אוֹתָךְ בְּחֶמֶה אַפָּךְ וְאַנְיָךְ יִסִּירוּ וְאַחֲרִיתֶךָ בַּחֶרֶב תִּפּוֹל הִמָּה בְּנִיךָ וּבָנוֹתֶיךָ יִקְחוּ וְאַחֲרִיתֶךָ  
תֹּאכַל בָּאֵשׁ: וְהַפְּשִׁיטוּךָ אֶת־בְּגָדֶיךָ וְלָקְחוּ כָלִי תַפְאָרְתֶךָ:

The sons of Babylon and all Chaldea, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, all the sons of Ashur with them: beautiful young men, all of them governors and commanders, officers and warriors, all of them riders of horses. They will come against you from the north (with) chariot and wagon, and with an assembly of people; they will set buckler and shield and helmet against you all around... They will cut off your nose and your ears, and the rest of you will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters, and the rest of you will be consumed by fire. They will strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful ornaments (Ezek 23:23-26).

Ezekiel uses Akkadian technical terms for the Neo-Assyrian officials each of the three times they are mentioned in Ezekiel 23:5-6, 12, and 23: *qērôbîm* (from Akkadian *qarbûtu* or *LÚ ša qurrubûti*, bodyguard<sup>354</sup>), *pahôt* (from *bēl pīhāti*, governor or officer<sup>355</sup>), *sēgānîm* (from *šaknu*, governor or commander<sup>356</sup>), and *pārāšîm* (from *paraššannu*, chariot<sup>357</sup>). Since all of the technical terms used are common in Neo-Babylonian as well

<sup>354</sup> In verse 23 the MT has *qērû'im* in place of *qērôbîm*. Akkadian *qarbûtu* is possibly from Aramaic originally.

<sup>355</sup> CAD p, 361.

<sup>356</sup> CAD š I, 180-191.

<sup>357</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 739. The terms do not always occur in this order.

as Neo-Assyrian, it is possible that the writer imposes a Babylonian framework on both the Babylonian and Assyrian armies. However, the fact that he uses a different term, *šālišîm*, for the Babylonian officers suggests that he recognizes the distinctions between the two.<sup>358</sup>

All of the Assyrian troops are called *bāḥûrê ḥemed*, “young men of desire,” in verses 6 and 12. The fact they are young and desirable explains why Oholah and Oholibah are attracted to them, but also constructs an image of a healthy, virile Assyrian army. The word *bāḥûr*, most frequently translated “young man” in Hebrew, can also mean “chosen.” In Neo-Babylonian, *beḥêru* specifically means “to levy troops,” so this term may also have military connotations.<sup>359</sup> The phrase *mibḥar bēnê ’aššûr*, “choice Assyrians,” in verse 7 supports the image of elite troops, especially when juxtaposed with *pārāšîm rôkbê sūsîm*, “chariots, riders of horses,” in verse 6.<sup>360</sup> These are not average foot-soldiers, but powerful military leaders.

In verse 24, as the Assyrians, Babylonians, and their allies enact Yahweh’s

---

<sup>358</sup> Stephanie Dalley has shown that the Neo-Babylonian kings styled themselves as a continuation of the Neo-Assyrian line, apparently with some justification. There is evidence that Babylon’s rise to prominence was the result of a power struggle between the rulers in Nineveh and Babylon, both seats of Assyrian rulership. The continuity of royal traditions and scribal practices supports this fact. Dalley writes: “In Syria the élite did not have to change allegiance from Assyrians to Babylonians, but only to acquiesce to the victors in a civil war” (Stephanie Dalley, “The Transition from Neo-Assyrians to Neo-Babylonians: Break or Continuity?” in *Eretz Israel*, Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume (2003), 25-28 [27]). This provides good reason for believing that there might have been some continuity in military practices from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian periods as well.

<sup>359</sup> Though it is an Aramaic loanword (CAD b). Interestingly, Meira Weiss notes that in Israel’s more recent history, the Hebrew word *bacharut* is used to emphasize the youthfulness of certain political movements, such as *Ha-Bacharût Ha-Sošialistît* (The Socialist Youth). She posits that the connection between youth and “chosenness” has been curated “through a long and painful militaristic history of young soldiers who ‘gave their life on the altar of the state,’ as the common commemorative phrase goes” (Weiss, *The Chosen Body*, 148 n.2).

<sup>360</sup> Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 739) argues that *pārāšîm* are chariots here based on the Akkadian *paraššannu* and the fact there is no need to have two words for horse riders.

punishment upon Jerusalem, each man bears a buckler (*šinnā*) and shield (*māgēn*) and wears a helmet (*qōbā*). These descriptions of military personnel closely resemble the one in Ezekiel 26, the account of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Tyre.

כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה הַנִּנִּי מִבְּיַד אֶל־צָר נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל מֵצָפוֹן מֶלֶךְ מַלְכִּים בָּסוּס וּבָרֶכֶב וּבַפָּרָשִׁים וְקָהָל  
וְעַם־רַב: בְּנוֹתַי בַּשָּׂדֶה בַּחֲרֹב יִהְיֶה וְנָתַן עָלֶיהָ דֶּיֶק וְשָׁפַף עָלֶיהָ סִלְלָה וְהָקִים עָלֶיהָ צָנָה: וּמַחֵי קָהָלוֹ יִתֵּן  
בְּחֻמוֹתֶיהָ וּמִגְדָּלֶיהָ יִתֵּן בַּחֲרֻבוֹתָיו: מִשְׁפַּעַת סוּסָיו יַכְסֹף אַבְנֵיהֶם מִקּוֹל פָּרָשׁ וְגִלְגָּל וְרֶכֶב תִּרְעַשְׁנָה חֻמוֹתֶיהָ בְּבֹאוֹ  
בַּשָּׁעָרִים כַּמְבֹּאֵי עִיר מִבְּקָעָה:

For thus said the Lord Yahweh: “I am bringing Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, against Tyre from the north – the king of kings – with horse, chariot, riders, an army, and many people. <sup>8</sup>He will slaughter your daughters in the field with the sword, set a siege wall against you, pour out a mound against you, and raise a shield against you. <sup>9</sup>He will set the blow of the battering ram against your walls and tear down your towers with his swords. <sup>10</sup>He will cover you with the dust of his numerous horses. Your walls will shake from the sound of rider, wheel, and chariot. When he enters your gates, it will be like entering a breached city” (Ezek 26:7-10).

Both are said to be comprised of a great host (*qāhāl we-‘am rāb* in 26:7 and *qēhal ‘ammîm* in 23:24) made up of horsemen, chariots, and wagons (*pāraš wēgalgal wārekeb* in 26:10 and *pārāšîm* in 23:6, 12; *rekeb wēgalgal* in 23:24). The men are armed with swords (*hereb*; 26:8-9, 11 and 23:25) and shields (*šinnā*; 26:8; 23:24). There are no extant Neo-Babylonian depictions of warfare, so it is difficult to say how accurate these descriptions are. They can only be compared to the Neo-Assyrians’ textual and art-historical depictions of their armies. These emphasize the use of riders and chariots, although not in the kind of siege warfare these passages of Ezekiel are describing<sup>361</sup> (e.g. Fig. 9).

The Neo-Assyrian use of weaponry also differs somewhat from Ezekiel’s

<sup>361</sup> Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 293, 297.

descriptions. Some of the foot-soldiers do wear conical helmets and use swords and full-length shields as well as hand-held shields, which may be described by the terms *šinnâ* and *māgēn* respectively in Ezekiel (see Fig. 10).<sup>362</sup> However, the three main divisions of the Neo-Assyrian army were spearmen, slingmen, and archers, none of which Ezekiel mentions. Archers were especially highly-valued, particularly for siege warfare.<sup>363</sup> It is possible that they were not used as heavily during the Neo-Babylonian period, yet when



Fig. 9  
Assyrian chariots and cavalry in the campaign against Elam.  
Detail of Ashurbanipal wall-panel from Northwest Palace, Nineveh. AO 19909.<sup>364</sup>

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 419. The distinction between *māgēn* and *šinnâ* are unclear. The two terms are often used together, as here, suggesting they had different functions. The main clue as to the difference between them occurs in 1 Kings 10:16f (cf. 2 Chron 9:15f) which says that Solomon made 200 *šinnâs*, each of 600 shekels of gold, and 300 *māginnîm*, each of 300 shekels of gold. This suggests that a Solomon-era *māgēn* was considered half as heavy as a *šinnâ*, but whether this was the case regarding the sixth-century BCE Babylonian army is difficult to say.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 294-95.

<sup>364</sup> Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, 452 (Musée du Louvre, AO 19909).



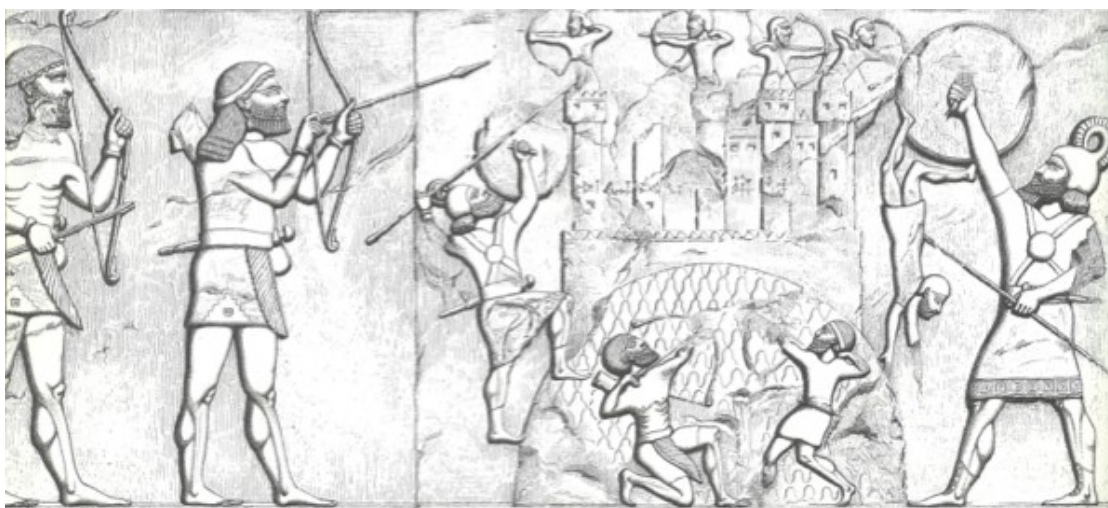


Fig. 10  
Assyrian soldiers attack Ekron.  
Drawings of wall-panels from Sargon's palace at Khorsabad (Dur-Sharrukin).<sup>365</sup>

Jeremiah speaks of the Babylonian army he mentions archers and spearmen. For Jeremiah, Babylonian soldiers are equipped with a “quiver” (*’ašpâ*; 5:16), “bow” (*qēšet*; 6:23) and “javelin” (*kîdôn*; 6:23).

The sword is a particularly powerful motif for Ezekiel, and his frequent evocation of this weapon may reflect his ideology more than his desire to represent Mesopotamian military practices accurately.<sup>366</sup> For example, in Ezekiel 21:1-17, Yahweh's judgement takes the form of a sword. It is set into the hand of “one who slays” (*hôrēg*), and if there were any doubt about the identity of this earthly enactor of Yahweh's will, in 21:20 the King of Babylon's sword is personified as Yahweh's judgement against Ammon and

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>366</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Ezekiel's rhetoric surrounding the sword as Yahweh's weapon of choice, see Reed, “Yahweh's ‘Cruel Sword,’” 285-310.

Judah. Likewise, all of the enemies of Babylon (and Judah) who will receive their final resting place “among the uncircumcised” are said to be “pierced by the sword” (*ḥalēlē-ḥereb*; 31:18; 32:20-21, 25-26, 28-32) or “fallen by the sword” (*nōpēlīm beḥereb*; 32:22-24).

Another practice mentioned in both Ezekiel 23 and 26 is that the Babylonian forces target the “children” villages of the “parent” city first: in the case of Tyre in 26:6 and 8, there is little doubt that the “daughters in the field” are the Tyrian towns situated on the mainland opposite the capital city.<sup>367</sup> For Oholibah or Jerusalem (Ezek 23:25, 47) the metaphor is less clear: both sons and daughters are mentioned, whereas towns and cities inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are considered the “sons and daughters” of the city. However, it is always possible for metaphors to have more than one meaning. The mention of the Mesopotamian troops destroying dependent towns in the land surrounding the main city reflects Ezekiel’s familiarity with their siege practices.<sup>368</sup>

Additionally, in both Ezekiel 23 and 26 is that the woman Jerusalem and the princes of Tyre have their fine clothes stripped from them (23:26, 29; 26:16). This enhances the shame of the defeated: a practice carried by the Neo-Assyrian armies if reliefs such as those depicting the siege of Lachish are to be believed (see Fig. 5). Only naked male captives are depicted, not women.<sup>369</sup>

---

<sup>367</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 532.

<sup>368</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 532.

<sup>369</sup> Cynthia Chapman notes that apart from one relief of Ashurbanipal, which seems to depict the rape of an Arab queen, there are no examples of violence against conquered women depicted in Neo-Assyrian wall-reliefs. She suggests that the foreign women are typically shown clothed and herded out of their city by Assyrian soldiers to indicate that they are now under the protection and ownership of the Assyrian king. Their defeated husbands, meanwhile, have failed in this masculine duty and thus are depicted naked and dismembered (Cynthia Chapman, “The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite/ Assyrian

Ezekiel's use of the symbols of colonizing violence, although perhaps not all historically accurate (such as the type of weaponry used) would have resonated powerfully with the forced migrant Judeans. This community had witnessed such practices in action in their very recent past. Ezekiel's description of the siege of Tyre in 26:7-10 is the most detailed of its kind in the Hebrew Bible;<sup>370</sup> Daniel Block claims that it "reflects thorough knowledge of military tactics, containing all the elements usually associated with siege warfare."<sup>371</sup> These include erecting a siege wall or tower (*dāyēq*; 26:8), constructing a ramp or mound (*sōlēlā*; 26:8), raising shields (*šinnā*; 26:8<sup>372</sup>), pounding walls with battering rams (*qēbōl*; 26:9), and dislodging the brickwork of walls with swords (*ḥereb*; 26:9).<sup>373</sup>

A similar description occurs in Ezekiel 4:2, where the prophet is told to lay siege to a brick in a sign-act portraying Jerusalem's future: "Put siegeworks (*māšôr*) against it, build a siege wall (*dāyēq*) against it, and cast up a mound (*sōlēlā*) against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams (*kārīm*) against it all around." Additionally, a

---

Encounter," (PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School, 2002), 62-63). The image of the Arab woman being raped by Assyrian soldiers can be found in Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA 2 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 47.

<sup>370</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 532.

<sup>371</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 40-41.

<sup>372</sup> Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 41) suggests the raising of a shield was to protect the attackers' artillery. Greenberg (*Ezekiel 21-37*, 533) argues that the phrase is more likely to refer to the body-length shields with curved tops attested in Neo-Assyrian depictions of sieges.

<sup>373</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 532; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 40-41. Block translates the final stage as "demolishing the defensive towers with axes," but Greenberg points out that there is no need to give *ḥereb* the unusual translation of "axe" since there are attestations of soldiers using swords to dislodge the brickwork of the besieged city, e.g. in the Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs depicting sieges in Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, 421, 448, 462.



description of a siege appears in Ezekiel 21:22, when Nebuchadnezzar receives the divination for Jerusalem: “To set battering rams (*kārîm*), to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams (*kārîm*) against the gates, to cast up mounds (*sôlêlâ*), to build siege walls (*dāyēq*).”

There is a Neo-Babylonian description of the practice of siege warfare to compare with Ezekiel’s descriptions. A royal inscription of Nabopolassar describes his attack on the Assyrian city of Rahilu, which, like Tyre, is located on an island (albeit in the Euphrates rather than the Mediterranean):

He did [battle against] Rahilu, a city which is in the middle of the Euphrates, and on that day the city was siezed. ...He built its... The people of the banks of the Euphrates came down to him. ...He camped against the city of Anat. The siege-engines from the west side... He brought the siege engines near to the wall. [He did] battle against [the city] and... [The king] of Assyria and his army came down and the king of Akkad and his army [*went home*].<sup>374</sup>

Even this brief account provides valuable information about Neo-Babylonian siege practices. For example, the Babylonian army attacked the city with siege engines (*ṣapîtu*), perhaps after building some kind of mound or ramp on which to manoeuvre them.

The siege process is also depicted in the Neo-Assyrian art-historical record. Yigael Yadin notes that the Neo-Assyrian images support some of the details mentioned in Ezekiel. For example, battering rams (commonly used by Assyrian armies since the reign

<sup>374</sup> [*ṣal-tú ana libbi* <sup>u</sup>]<sup>ru</sup>*Ra-ḫi-i-lu āli šá qabli-tú Pu-rat-tú ṭpuš-ma ina ūmi-šú-ma āla iṣ-ša-bat*  
[...]-šú *ib-ni amīl-ut šá aḥ(gú)* <sup>id</sup>*Pu-rat-tú a-na pāni-šú it-tar-du-ni*  
[...] x x [*ina muḥḥ*]<sup>i</sup> <sup>uru</sup>*A-na-ti it-ta-di ṣa-pi-t[ú ultu(?) e]berti(bal.ri) ereb šamši* (<sup>d</sup>utu.šú.a)  
[...]x *kir ṣa-pi-tú ana dūri uq-tar-rib ṣal-tú ana libbi [āli ṭpuš-ma]* x x x  
[... *šār* <sup>kur</sup>]*Aš-šur u ummāni<sup>me</sup>-šú ur-dam-ma šār Akkad<sup>ki</sup> u ummāni<sup>me</sup>-šú* x x [...] x x

BM 21901 33-37 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 93-94 (Originally published in C.J. Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh*, 39). ANET translates line 34: “Stone from the bank of the Euphrates they laid(?) down against it” (304) but the reading *amīlu-ut* was confirmed by collation (Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 93).

of Ashur-naṣirpal II) were used in a targeted way against cities' gates (Ezek 21:22) because they were the weakest points in the wall, but also because there was usually already a path leading up to them. However, sometimes a man-made ramp had to be constructed if the battering ram needed to be used against part of the wall itself (Ezek 4:2; 21:22; 26:8).<sup>375</sup>

Other siege tactics would be carried out at the same time as the battering rams, such as foot-soldiers using spears or swords to create a breach in the wall at a different location (Ezek 26:9). These soldiers would often wear shields on their backs to protect themselves from attacks from those on the walls above (Ezek 26:8). A wall relief from Sargon's palace at Khorsabad depicts the use of battering rams, ramps, and hand-held shields in an Assyrian campaign against the city of Pazashi.<sup>376</sup>

The forced migrant Judeans would have witnessed practices like this first-hand when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 598-597 BCE before Jehoiachin paid him tribute.<sup>377</sup> The evidence of a Babylonian siege having taken place at Tyre is ambiguous. It seems that the city was not destroyed by the Babylonians, but sieges had taken place often enough elsewhere that the description is accurate in its details. Although there are no art-historical depictions of Neo-Babylonian siege warfare, textual accounts such as Nabopolassar's royal inscription, cited above, suggest the Babylonians continued the Neo-Assyrian tradition of conducting violent sieges. Judging by the textual and art-

---

<sup>375</sup> Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study*, 315.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 425.

<sup>377</sup> According to the Babylonian Chronicle, this siege lasted approximately three months, from the month of *Kislev* (November-December) 598 BCE until the month of *Adar* (February-April) 597 BCE.

historical witnesses, these sieges had terrible outcomes for the inhabitants of the conquered city.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Ezekiel characterizes the Babylonians primarily by their military practices. There is a sense of awe embedded in the description of havoc wrought by the Babylonian army in Ezekiel 26. Ezekiel is very clear that they are the tool of Yahweh's punishment: the glory belongs to Yahweh and not Nebuchadnezzar. Yet Ezekiel's community would have been acutely aware of how effective and dangerous Yahweh's "tool" could be. The elite garments described in Ezekiel 23:14-15 might have been appealing at first glance, but they were inseparable from the apparatus of war. Imperialism and violence were never far from the surface. Ezekiel 23 condemns Oholah and Oholibah for not recognizing this fact, instead luring these dangerous men right into her bedchamber where she was most vulnerable.

In contrast to the Babylonians, Ezekiel never describes the Judeans as wearing armour or carrying weapons. Even though Judah must have continued to have an army after 597 BCE (see 2 Kgs 25:5, 19), the lack of its mention fits with Ezekiel's advocacy against trying to throw off the Babylonian yoke. The writer of Ezekiel may not have gone as far as that of First Isaiah, who told the Judeans to "beat swords into ploughshares" (Isa 2:2), but he agrees that any defeat the Judeans will enact upon their enemies will be theological, not military.<sup>378</sup> That he chooses to portray Jerusalem as a sexually violated

---

<sup>378</sup> Lewis, "'You Have Heard What the Kings of Assyria Have Done,'" 94.

woman in his metaphors of Chapters 16 and 23 indicates his view that the complete and emasculating defeat of the city has already been determined.<sup>379</sup>

Ideologically, Ezekiel's portrayal of Babylon as the earthly manifestation of Yahweh's sword may have led to his non-aggressive stance towards Babylon. Socio-historically, the experience of military defeat may have influenced Ezekiel's desire to avoid further trauma and humiliation at the hands of the Babylonians. Doubtless, there were some Judeans who disagreed with this non-confrontational approach, which may have been a source of some conflict in their leadership.<sup>380</sup> Ezekiel's condemnation of the "false prophets" who predict a Judean victory in 13:1-16 may reflect such an ideological disagreement.<sup>381</sup> For Ezekiel, military practices could not be part of the identity of those in the forced migration. Perhaps this meant that the military aspect of their Mesopotamian captors, more than anything else, identified them as the threatening other.

#### **2.2.4 Religious Practices**

There is some evidence that Ezekiel was familiar with Neo-Babylonian religious traditions and practices. Sometimes he appears to have adapted them for a monotheistic context. For example, Dale Launderville suggests that Ezekiel 37 attributes both

---

<sup>379</sup> Brad E. Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric: Prophetic Metaphorization of Cities as Female," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Frank Rithel Ames (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2008), 108-109.

<sup>380</sup> Daniel Smith (*The Religion of the Landless*, 127-35) has shown that in forced migrant communities there is often conflict within new leadership about whether to adapt to the new situation or whether to fight it. This is how he interprets the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jer 29, for example. Whilst Jeremiah advocated for the forced migrants settling down in Babylonia, Hananiah promoted the "Inviolability of Zion" theology and foresaw Yahweh's swift end to the exile.

<sup>381</sup> See Section 4.3.2 for further discussion.

energizing and performative powers to Yahweh: powers which belonged to Ishtar and Ea respectively in Mesopotamian religion.<sup>382</sup>

Other times, Ezekiel condemns Babylonian-influenced religious practices when they are carried out by Judeans, such as the ritual of weeping for Tammuz in the Jerusalem Temple described in Ezekiel 8:14. Stökl claims that the Tammuz customs reached Judah via Aramaic tradition, so cannot be claimed as evidence of contact with Babylonian culture.<sup>383</sup> The long-term nature of Mesopotamian contact with Syria-Palestine makes it impossible to say for certain whether Ezekiel's rejection of the Tammuz ritual is provoked by his Babylonian setting in particular or his insistence on exclusive Yahwism more generally.<sup>384</sup>

Lastly, there are religious practices that Ezekiel may have adopted without comment. The vision of a new Temple in Ezekiel 40-48 has been said to reveal Babylonian influences. Tova Ganzel and Shalom Holtz found that the architectural layout of Ezekiel's imagined Jerusalem Temple corresponds to what is known of Neo-Babylonian temples, especially the complex path to the "holy of holies" involving multiple chambers and courtyards.<sup>385</sup> The use of this structure to restrict access to certain parts of the

---

<sup>382</sup> Dale F. Launderville, "The Threat of Syncretism to Ezekiel's Exilic Audience in the Dry Bones Passage," *WdO* 45 (2015), 38-49.

<sup>383</sup> Stökl, "Schoolboy Ezekiel," 55; "A Youth Without Blemish," 233.

<sup>384</sup> See Section 3.2.1 for further discussion.

<sup>385</sup> Tova Ganzel and Shalom E. Holz, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," *VT* 64 (2014), 211-26 (219-20).

sanctuary based on the hierarchy of personnel is also a common feature of Ezekiel's temple and Neo-Babylonian temples.<sup>386</sup>

Nevader conducted a study on the unusual role of the prince (*nāšī'*) in Ezekiel's vision. This figure has an active role in the life of the Temple, providing many of its resources, though he is not a priest. Nevader compares his role to that of the idealized Neo-Babylonian king, which is apolitical and non-militaristic. However, she notes that there are important differences, most significantly the Ezekelian prince's extremely restricted access to the Jerusalem Temple in comparison to the Neo-Babylonian king, who could enter the inner sanctuary of a temple if accompanied by a priest.<sup>387</sup> Additionally, others have found parallels for the role of Ezekiel's *nāšī'* in the Hebrew Bible itself,<sup>388</sup> so it is unclear if there is sufficient cause to posit Babylonian influence.

All of this may suggest that Ezekiel was familiar with many aspects of Neo-Babylonian religious traditions and practices. For the most part, he seeks to condemn them or repackage them for a Yahwistic context so that his community does not adopt the religion of their Mesopotamian neighbours. Ezekiel's relationship to potential foreign influences on Judean religious practices is discussed more fully in Section 3.2. Yet there is one example of religious practice which Ezekiel attributes explicitly to the Babylonians, or rather, to the King of Babylon, that requires further examination.

---

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. 222-24.

<sup>387</sup> Madhavi Nevader, "Picking up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40-48?" in *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 268-91.

<sup>388</sup> E.g. Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, HSM 10 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976) and Stephen L. Cook, "Ezekiel's Recovery of Pre-monarchic, Tribal Israel," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, FAT 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 360-73. See Section 3.3.3 for further discussion.

## Divination

Ezekiel 21 devotes some attention to the Babylonian practice of divination:

כִּי־עָמַד מִלֶּךְ־בָּבֶל אֶל־אֵם הַדֶּרֶךְ בְּרֹאשׁ שְׁנֵי הַדְּרָכִים לִקְסֵם־קָסָם קִלְקַל בְּחֻצִּים וְשָׁאֵל בְּתַרְפִּים רָאָה בְּכַבֵּד:  
בְּיָמֵינוּ הִנֵּה הַקָּסָם וְרוֹשְׁלָם

For the king of Babylon stood at the source of the road, at the head of two roads, to conduct divination. He shook the arrows; he asked the *tērāpîm*; he examined the liver.<sup>389</sup> The divination of Jerusalem was on its right<sup>389</sup> (Ezek 21:21-22a; Heb 26-27a).

Here, Ezekiel has a vision of the king of Babylon (presumably Nebuchadnezzar)

conducting three different types of divination (*liqsom qāsem*): shaking arrows as a means of drawing lots, enquiring of the *tērāpîm*, and inspecting a liver. Nebuchadnezzar does these things in order to determine whether the Babylonian army will attack Jerusalem first or Rabbah of the Ammonites (21:25, Heb.). Ezekiel's claim that Nebuchadnezzar is Yahweh's instrument has a practical side, which is revealed in this pericope.

Nebuchadnezzar is not a Yahwist, so it is not immediately clear how his actions could be guided by Yahweh. Ezekiel 21:21-22 provides an explanation: Nebuchadnezzar seeks omens through divination and, unbeknownst to him, it is Yahweh who provides them.<sup>390</sup>

Vanderhooft claims that Ezekiel's description of these divinatory practices reveals his familiarity with the Babylonians' use of them, including the specific terminology associated with extispicy (*rā'ā bakkābēd*, "he looked at/examined the liver").

Vanderhooft attributes this to Ezekiel's acculturation process in Babylonia, reasoning that

---

<sup>389</sup> *Bîmînô* could also be translated "in his right hand." Translated this way, it might refer to the arrow drawn as a lot rather than the part of the liver.

<sup>390</sup> Moshe Greenberg, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Parting of the Ways: Ezek 21:26-27," in *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 267-71 (267).

extispicy is not a native practice to the Judeans.<sup>391</sup> However, bronze liver models dating to the second millennium BCE have been found at Hazor and Megiddo, suggesting that the practice was known in the Levant long before the sixth century BCE.<sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that the Neo-Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal used extispicy to decide the direction of their campaigns. It is likely that the Neo-Babylonian kings did likewise, prompting Ezekiel's mention of this practice.<sup>393</sup>

Greenberg suggests it is unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar would have launched a military campaign without having decided on his first object of attack.<sup>394</sup> Yet this episode is part of a vision, not intended to be an accurate historical account of the event. This is further suggested by Ezekiel's mention of two other divinatory practices aside from extispicy: belomancy and teraphim. There is no evidence that either of them was a common Neo-Babylonian ritual.

The custom of "shaking the arrows" (*qilqal baḥiṣṣîm*) as a form of casting lots is only potentially attested in the archaeological record from the twelfth to ninth centuries BCE in Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine.<sup>395</sup> For example, arrow and javelin heads with

---

<sup>391</sup> Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon," 113. The same opinion is shared by Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 443-444; Samuel Iwry, "New Evidence for Belomancy in Ancient Palestine and Phoenicia," *JAOS* 81/1 (1961) 27-34 (29); and Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 386.

<sup>392</sup> B. Landsberger and H. Tadmor, "Fragments of Clay Liver Models from Hazor," *IEJ* 14/4 (1964), 201-218; G. Ernest Wright, "The Discoveries at Megiddo 1935-39," *BA* 13/2 (1950), 28-46.

<sup>393</sup> Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon," 114. Extispicy was still practised in first millennium BCE Mesopotamia, as revealed by the Neo-Assyrian evidence, but it was much less common than in earlier periods. Celestial divination had become the primary form of omen-seeking by this time.

<sup>394</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 429.

<sup>395</sup> Frank Moore Cross, "The Arrow of Suwar, Retainer of 'Abday," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographic Studies*, Joseph Aviram Volume (1996), 9\*-17\*; Benjamin Sass, "Inscribed Babylonian Arrowheads of the Turn of the Second Millennium and their Phoenician Counterparts," *UF* 21 (1989), 349-56. Sass originally dated the Proto-Canaanite arrowhead inscriptions to the 11th to 10th



*ḥš* plus a personal or divine name inscribed on them have been found at several Canaanite and Phoenician sites. Samuel Iwry concluded that the most likely explanation for their use was belomancy.<sup>396</sup> There is little evidence of the practice between the period of these very early arrowheads (if indeed they were used as lots) and the pre-Islamic Arabian tradition of casting arrowheads as lots in sanctuaries to determine the will of the gods. The only exception is if belomancy is what is evoked in 2 Kings 13:14-19, when Elisha has King Joash of Israel shoot and strike arrows in order to determine military victory against Aram.<sup>397</sup> Either the practice was much more widespread than the extant evidence attests, or Ezekiel is anachronistically attributing a much older Mesopotamian (and possibly Syro-Palestinian) tradition to the Neo-Babylonian king.

The latter situation is potentially more likely given the second form of divination Nebuchadnezzar conducts in Ezekiel 21:26 (Heb.). The Babylonian king is said to “ask the teraphim” (*šā’al battērāpîm*), another practice that is completely unattested in Neo-Babylonian sources. The custom is ambiguous in the Hebrew Bible even after a great

---

centuries BCE (354), but in his more recent work (*The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium* [Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2005], 34, 44), Sass re-evaluates their date as 10th to 9th centuries BCE based on comparative epigraphic evidence.

<sup>396</sup> Iwry, “New Evidence for Belomancy,” 28. Cross (“Arrow of Suwar”); Sass (“Inscribed Babylonian Arrowheads,” *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*); and McCarter (“Two Bronze Arrowheads with Archaic Alphabetic Inscriptions,” *Eretz-Israel*, Frank Moore Cross Volume (1999), 123\*-128\*) do not share Iwry’s interpretation of these artefacts as lots, nor do they suggest that a different function can be determined from the limited context available (especially since many of the arrowheads are unprovenanced). Anne Marie Kitz suggests that the shaking action was to mix up the lots, which in this case happen to be arrows, since other descriptions of lot-casting in the Hebrew Bible involve tossing the lots into a common receptacle (Prov 16:33a) and the chosen lot going out (Josh 18:8, 10), falling out (1 Chr 24:31; 25:8; 26:13, 14; Isa 34:17; Neh 10:35; 11:1; Jonah 1:7; Esth 3:7; 9:24), or rising up (Lev 16:9, 10; Josh 18:11a; 19:10), most likely as a result of the shaking (Anne Marie Kitz, “The Hebrew Terminology of Lot Casting and its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *CBQ* 62/2 (2000), 207-214).

<sup>397</sup> Iwry, “New Evidence for Belomancy,” 28. This interpretation is widely contested, with some interpreting Joash’s act a sympathetic magic, i.e. shooting an arrow towards Aram to bring about military victory, e.g. Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 503 (though Jones sees Joash’s second action, striking the ground with the arrows, as a means of divination).

deal of research on the matter. Scholars have attempted to find Near Eastern parallels, and for a long time the dominant view was that the biblical teraphim were philologically linked to the Hittite *tarpi(š)*, a spirit that could be either protective or malevolent.<sup>398</sup>

However, recent scholarship has shown that the teraphim are functionally more similar to other Near Eastern practices. Shawn Flynn has suggested they are most likely images of the deity being consulted: prestige items signifying that their owner has a direct link to the gods.<sup>399</sup> This understanding is in keeping with their ownership by Saul's daughter Michal in 1 Sam 19:13-16. Additionally, there is evidence that in the Old Babylonian period, kings carried divine images into battle with them for military support.<sup>400</sup> This tradition may lie behind Ezekiel's association of divine statues with Babylonian warfare. However, Karel van der Toorn shows that by the Neo-Assyrian period, the gods' military support was seen as more transcendent: earthly battles took on a cosmic dimension, and the gods participated from heaven.<sup>401</sup> One example of this was depiction of the god Ashur's *melammu* or divine radiance assisting the king; a concept which the Neo-Babylonians adapted for their own gods.<sup>402</sup>

---

<sup>398</sup> H.A. Hoffner, Jr. was the first to suggest this connection (Hoffner, "The Linguistic Origins of Teraphim," *BSac* 124 (1967) 230-38).

<sup>399</sup> Flynn, "The Teraphim in Light of Mesopotamian and Egyptian Evidence," *CBQ* 74 (2012), 694-711 (711).

<sup>400</sup> e.g. Shamshi-Adad and the kings of Mari (ARM 1 53 + M. 7340:18; *MARI* 4 [1985], 316-17, n. 107); Karel van der Toorn, "Mesopotamian Prophecy Between Immanence and Transcendence: A Comparison of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy," in *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*, ed. Martti Nissinen (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000), 71-87 (85).

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-86.

<sup>402</sup> Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *melammu*," 15.

Furthermore, several scholars have argued based on Ugaritic and Akkadian parallels that the teraphim are not representations of national or even household deities, but rather of their owners' deceased ancestors. The teraphim are referred to as *'ēlōhîm* ("gods") in Judges 18:24 and Genesis 31:30, which has contributed to their interpretation as divine statues. Yet van der Toorn and Lewis have pointed out that Akkadian texts sometimes use the term *ilu* ("god") for a ghost, whilst an Ugaritic hymn to Shamash has *'ilm* ("gods") in parallel to *mtm* ("dead ones;" KTU 1.6.6, 45-49).<sup>403</sup> Texts from Emar repeatedly refer to "the god(s) and the dead," which van der Toorn and Lewis interpret as a hendiadys. These divine statues often feature in inheritance texts, which place the responsibility of their care in the hands of the one who inherits the main family house.<sup>404</sup>

If the biblical teraphim represented deified ancestors in a similar custom, they may have been consulted for oracles as a form of divination. In the Emar texts, for example, the verb *nubbû*, to call upon, is often used in connection with the household gods.<sup>405</sup> However, there is no evidence of the deification of ancestors or that household gods had this role in Neo-Babylonian divinatory practices.<sup>406</sup>

The third and final form of divination that Nebuchadnezzar performs in 21:26 (Heb.) is inspecting the liver (*rā'â bakkābad*). As mentioned above, extispicy (especially

---

<sup>403</sup> van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence," *CBQ* 52 (1990), 203-222 (211); K. van der Toorn and T.J. Lewis, "*Tērāpîm*," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 8 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 768. Van der Toorn further shows that *gesem* is associated with necromancy in Deut 18:10-14; 1 Sam 28; and Mic 3:6, 11 ("The Nature of Biblical Teraphim," 215).

<sup>404</sup> van der Toorn and Lewis, "*Tērāpîm*," 768.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> van der Toorn, "The Nature of Biblical Teraphim," 213-14.

examination of the liver, hepatoscopy) was practiced in Mesopotamian divination throughout its history (though with less frequency in the first millennium BCE). It is likely that Ezekiel was referring to a well-known practice of the Babylonians. Furthermore, he knows that the right side of the liver was the auspicious one for omens, since that is the side Jerusalem appears on in 21:27 (Heb.), indicating that Nebuchadnezzar will move his troops there first.<sup>407</sup>

The question remains as to why Ezekiel would mention other forms of divination that do not seem to have been practiced during the Neo-Babylonian period. The lack of extant evidence for these customs does not constitute proof that they were never practised. Yet their absence in any even near-contemporary documentation is striking, given how much evidence exists for other forms of divination, including extispicy, mantic dreams, and inspired prophecy.<sup>408</sup>

The Mesopotamian custom was to repeat omen inquiries three times to ensure an accurate response, especially since different dates were seen as being more or less auspicious for different divinatory practices. Ezekiel may have known of this tradition and thus attempted to create a three-fold montage of divination that seemed appropriate for the foreign king.<sup>409</sup> Perhaps Ezekiel's knowledge of the Babylonians' proclivity for diverse forms of divination prompted him to mention various customs he knew of, whether or not they were Babylonian.

---

<sup>407</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 429.

<sup>408</sup> van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim," 214.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

*Qesem*, the general term for divination initially used to describe Nebuchadnezzar's activity (Ezek 21:21), is condemned in the Hebrew Bible as a foreign and false practice that Israelites should avoid.<sup>410</sup> Belomancy is only potentially mentioned outside of Ezekiel in 2 Kings 13:14-19, where it is encouraged by the prophet Elisha. The teraphim are ambiguous: they are mentioned without an accompanying value judgement in the case of Rachel (Gen 31:19, 30-35), Micah (Judges 17-18), and Michal (1 Sam 19:13-16). Yet teraphim are abolished in Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 23), and the term appears in parallel to the word *'āwen*, "iniquity," in 1 Samuel 15:23 and Zechariah 10:2. The practice of extispicy is not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but as shown above, it was doubtless well-known from Mesopotamia.

It appears, then, that Ezekiel attributed a foreign-sounding amalgamation of divinatory practices to Nebuchadnezzar. The description of the Babylonian king carrying out a variety of customs the biblical writers consider non-Yahwistic would have identified him as belonging outside of the Judean community envisioned by Ezekiel. Whilst Ezekiel shows that it is possible for Yahweh to work through these divinatory rituals to his own end, their ritually ambiguous nature marks them as improper practices for Judeans.<sup>411</sup>

Therefore, it can be argued that Ezekiel 21:21-22 has the opposite effect to the one Vanderhooft claims. In Vanderhooft's opinion, Ezekiel's mention of extispicy without

---

<sup>410</sup> e.g. Deut 18:10, 14; Josh 13:22; 1 Sam 6:2; 15:23; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 44:25; Jer 14:14; 27:9, 29:8; Ezek 12:24; 13:6-9; Mic 3:7, 11; Zech 10:2 (where it appears alongside *teraphim*).

<sup>411</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 28:7-19 where Yahweh communicates with Saul via necromancy, though it does not bode well for Saul. Biblical writers like Ezekiel do not contest that the non-approved ritual practices work, they contest that they are appropriate for those who worship Yahweh. This can also be observed in the passage condemning female prophets in Ezek 13:17-23. Ezekiel does not cast doubt on the fact that these women have real control over life and death; he doubts that their means of control are appropriate (Section 4.1.2).

further explanation reveals the exiled Judeans' familiarity with Babylonian practices of divination. This may be the case as far as extispicy is concerned, but the placement of this practice alongside two unattested ones suggests little familiarity with anything else to do with Babylonian omen-seeking. Ezekiel seems rather to be painting a picture of foreign-sounding rituals to signify Nebuchadnezzar's otherness, especially in terms of ritual procedures. Ezekiel does not need to risk openly accusing the Babylonians of religious impurity in their own territory when he can indicate it to his community through his (mis)representation of Babylonian practices.

Babylonian practices are not the only ones which Ezekiel intentionally presents as foreign. Although he does not pay as much attention to any individual foreign nation as he does to Babylon, Ezekiel still makes known his ideology against them, especially when it comes to Assyria, Egypt, and Tyre.

### **2.3 Other Foreigners**

With the exception of Assyria, foreign nations other than Babylon appear primarily in the Oracles Against the Nations in Ezekiel 25-32. Ezekiel prophesies destruction for Judah's Levantine neighbours Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (21:28-32; 25:1-17), and Sidon (28:20-24),<sup>412</sup> as well as the more distant southern nations Ethiopia, Put, Lud, Arabia, and Libya (30:5). Yet the brunt of his vitriol is saved for Egypt (Ezek 17, 29-32) and Tyre (Ezek 26-28). This may be due to the fact that both nations incited Judah to join them in resisting Babylonian control: the decision which led to Judah's downfall. Ezekiel

---

<sup>412</sup> Cf. Jeremiah's list of those who sent envoys to Zedekiah to incite him to rebellion is very similar to this one, comprising Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon (Jer 27:3). Jeremiah warns them to serve the king of Babylon or suffer destruction (27:8).

suggests it is dishonourable for Judah to break their treaty with Babylon and that such scheming will only lead to a worsened punishment at the hands of Yahweh's instrument (Ezek 17:11-15). He criticizes Tyre and Egypt for their hubris and threatens them with a downfall to match it.

Whereas Jerusalem and its Temple were razed to the ground, Tyre was not destroyed.<sup>413</sup> The Judeans' feelings of bitterness towards this city-state (which Ezekiel 26:2 suggests had already been Judah's commercial rival) would only have increased later on. Baalezer, the rebellious king of Tyre, was released from Babylonian imprisonment, along with two of his successors, and reappointed as king.<sup>414</sup> His release may have awoken false hopes in the exiled Judeans about their own return. When they realized they were not to receive the same treatment, their bitterness towards Tyre would have been all the more acute.

In Ezekiel 26, Tyre is a city under attack; in 27:1-10, it is described as a great ship full of the wares that were traded in its ports. There is little mention of the human Tyrians until the obscure oracle against the Prince of Tyre (*nēgîd šôr*) in Ezekiel 28. In verses 1-10 he is described as wealthy and proud to the point of declaring himself a god, which merits his punishment and destruction by foreign nations. In verse 12, a detailed description of the Prince himself begins. He is "the seal of perfection" (*hōkēm toknît*) and "perfect in beauty" (*kēlîl yôpî*), wearing a covering (*měsukâ*) of gold and precious stones.

---

<sup>413</sup> Beaulieu, *A History of Babylon*, 229.

<sup>414</sup> Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 110. Some scholars have suggested that Nebuchadnezzar's son and heir, Amēl-Marduk, may even have allowed some Tyrian deportees to return home (e.g. Bob Becking, "Jojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25,27-30," in *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies*, BETL, ed. C. Breckelmans and J. Lust [Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1990], 283-93 [290]). If this were Amēl-Marduk's policy, it was short-lived due to his reign only being two and a half years long before Neriglissar usurped the throne (Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 62).

Commentators have long noted that the precious stones listed are similar to those worn by the high priest in Exodus 28 and 39.

Lydia Lee convincingly argues that Tyre is portrayed in similar terms to the Jerusalem Temple and Priesthood in both Chapters 27 and 28 in order to reveal to Ezekiel's audience the inevitability of the destruction of both.<sup>415</sup> This is supported by the fact that in 26:16, the defeated princes of Tyre (albeit the *něšî'ê yām*, "princes of the sea," and not the *něgîd šôr*) "remove their robes (*mě'ilîm*) and strip off their embroidered garments (*riqmôt*)." Like the defeated Judeans, their symbol of shameful conquest is the removal of their luxury clothing. In the case of Tyre, it is a fate Ezekiel threatens, but it is not one resolved by history.

Lee's understanding of Tyre in the book of Ezekiel forms part of her argument that Ezekiel's Oracles Against the Nations reveal the "unstable boundary" between Judah and the other nations, using lexical links to connect their fates.<sup>416</sup> She notes that there is a recognition of shared flaws and frailty.<sup>417</sup> Several other biblical prophets use this rhetorical device to put the Israelites' wrongdoing in context for them. They seek to show that Israel and Judah's identity as Yahweh's chosen people does not automatically make them more holy than other nations, but creates a higher expectation from which they have fallen far short (e.g. Amos 3:2).

This is a theological position, and Lee is well aware that even while Ezekiel demonstrates the nations' shared sinfulness, each one retains its unique characteristics;

---

<sup>415</sup> Lee, *Mapping Judah's Fate*, 4.

<sup>416</sup> Lee, *Mapping Judah's Fate in Ezekiel's Oracles Against the Nations*, 4.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.



their ethnic identities are not merged together. In Ezekiel's idealized future, Judah must set itself apart from these other nations as should always have been the case.<sup>418</sup> Judah's treacherous alliances with Tyre and Egypt are proof enough of this. Additionally, Ezekiel 36:6-7 suggests that Judah suffered unnecessary disgrace at the hands of its neighbours during its time of punishment. In return, he promises disgrace to those nations when Judah is restored.<sup>419</sup>

Ezekiel reinforces the boundaries between Judah and other nations as he did between Judah and Babylon. In addition to Egypt and Tyre, Assyria is one of the primary targets of his criticism. In Chapter 23, an extended metaphor concerning Israel and Judah's political history, Ezekiel interprets Judah's fickle alliances with Egypt and Assyria as precursors to its defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. The Neo-Assyrian empire had been the primary imperial power threatening Judah's independence between the ninth and seventh centuries BCE. Even though it no longer existed by Ezekiel's time, its presence in Judean cultural memory loomed large.

The way Ezekiel describes the Assyrians' practices of bodily modification reflects his perception of their wealth, imperial power, and foreignness compared to the Judeans over whom they once ruled (Section 2.3.1). By contrast, Ezekiel describes the metaphorical bodies of Egypt and the mysterious enemy, Gog, as non-human and even

---

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Ezekiel does not dwell on this issue as much as other biblical writers, many of whom accuse Edom in particular of taking advantage of Judah in its time of need (e.g. Isa 11:14; 34:5-17; Jer 49:7-22; Amos 1:11; Obad 11; Ps 137:7). A fragment of a 6th century BCE letter found at Arad confirms the historical accuracy of this claim: it contains a request from a Judean military commander to move troops to another position, "otherwise Edom will arrive there" (Mordechai Cogan, "Into Exile: From the Assyrian Conquest of Israel to the Fall of Babylon," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242-75 (267).

monstrous (Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3, and 2.3.4). Another way in which Ezekiel “others” foreign nations is by describing them as uncircumcised, setting them apart from Judeans who undertook this bodily modification as a sign of their ethnic and religious identity (Section 2.3.5). Ezekiel affirms the ethnic boundaries between Judeans and non-Judeans by emphasizing symbolic bodily attributes or practices which identify foreigners as a threat to Judean purity or even existence.

### 2.3.1 Assyria

Ezekiel ignores Assyria in his oracles, as he does Babylon. His main treatment of Assyria occurs in Chapter 23, where the nation is symbolized by men who entice Oholah and Oholibah away from Yahweh:

וּמַעֲגֵב עַל-מַאֲהֶבֶיָּהּ אֶל-אַשּׁוּר קְרוּבִים: לְבָשֵׁי תְכֵלֶת פָּחוֹת וְסִגְנִים בַּחֹרֵי הָמָד כְּלָם פְּרָשִׁים רֹכְבֵי סוּסִים:

She desired her lovers, Ashur: warriors clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them beautiful young men; cavalymen, riders of horses (Ezek 23:5b-6).

אֶל-בְּנֵי אַשּׁוּר עֲגָבָהּ פָּחוֹת וְסִגְנִים קְרוּבִים לְבָשֵׁי מְכָלוֹל פְּרָשִׁים רֹכְבֵי סוּסִים בַּחֹרֵי הָמָד כְּלָם:

She desired the sons of Ashur: governors and commanders, warriors clothed in a splendid cloak, cavalymen, riders of horses; all of them beautiful young men (Ezek 23:12).

Ezekiel 23:6 describes the Assyrian men as “clothed in blue:” *lēbušê tēkēlet*. The word *tēkēlet* refers to the blue-purple colour created by using the mucus of the *murex trunculus* sea snail as dye.<sup>420</sup> There is evidence that this shade of blue was highly prized at least as early as the mid-second millennium BCE: the Hittite emperor demanded

<sup>420</sup> Irving Ziderman, “First Identification of Authentic *tēkēlet*,” BASOR 265 (1987), 25-33 (27).

garments in *ta-kil-tum* as tribute from Ugarit,<sup>421</sup> and such clothing was also sent as gifts between the Great Powers of the Amarna age.<sup>422</sup> It seems to have undergone a resurgence during the Neo-Assyrian period: between the ninth and seventh centuries BCE, Assyrian kings boasted of receiving purple garments from their defeated vassals, both in *argamannu* (red-purple) and *takiltu* (blue-purple). For example, Tiglath-Pileser III claimed that he received “linen garments with multi-coloured trimmings, *ta-kil-tu* wool, *ar-ga-man-nu* wool,” and, interestingly, “wild birds whose spread-out wings were dyed *takiltu*.” The source of this tribute was a large group of Syro-Palestinian states and Arabia.<sup>423</sup>

Archaeological evidence of *tēkēlet* production in particular has been found in heaps of discarded *Murex trunculus* shells in Tyre, Sidon, and Sarepta (as well as Ugarit).<sup>424</sup> There is also evidence of the *trunculus* snail on the coasts of Eilat,<sup>425</sup> so it is possible that Arabians could have accessed *tēkēlet* dye along the King’s Highway trade route, or produced their own elsewhere on the coast of the Red Sea. Conversely, Ezekiel 27:23-4 identifies “Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Ashur, Chilmad” as traders of

---

<sup>421</sup> Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, “Der Vertrag zwischen Šuppiluliuma und Niqmandu: Eine philologische und kulturhistorische Studie,” *WdO* 3/3 (1966) 206-45 (210).

<sup>422</sup> Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Latomus, 1970), 12.

<sup>423</sup> RINAP I Tiglath-Pileser III 15 3-4: *lu-bul-ti bir-me TÚG.GADA SÍG.ta-’kil’-tu ‘SÍG’.[ár]-ga-man-nu... iṣ-ṣur AN-e mut- tap-ri-šú-ti šá a-gap-pi-šú-nu a-na ta-kil-teṣar-pu*. Evidence that the prestige status of *takiltu* was known in the Nippur area is provided by an eighth-century BCE letter from the governor of Nippur to the king of Babylon seeking an alliance and asking for *takiltu* wool because none of good quality could be found in Chaldea (Steven W. Cole, *Nippur IV: The Early Neo-Babylonian Governor’s Archive from Nippur*, OIP 114 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1996), 37-39).

<sup>424</sup> P.E. Dion, “Aramean Tribes and Nations of First Millennium Western Asia,” in *CANE*, ed. Jack Sasson (New York: Hendrickson, 1995), 1281-94 (1281-94).

<sup>425</sup> Roland Gradwohl, *Die Farben im Alten Testament: Eine terminologische Studie* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelman, 1963), 69.

*tēkēlet* in the Tyrian marketplace. Ezekiel 27:7 attributes *tēkēlet* to “The Coasts of Elishah,” which is generally thought to refer to Cyprus. It is strange that Ezekiel imagines other nations providing the blue cloth for Tyre, since Phoenicia was so famous for its dyeing industry that it was named after the colour purple (*phoenikos* in Greek).

Mario Liverani has suggested that Ezek 27:11-25 was influenced by the Tyrian tradition of listing all of its foreign imports as if they were tribute.<sup>426</sup> Ezekiel groups the imports into four bands based on the distance travelled; textiles fall into the third-furthest band, which comprises manufactured products. Liverani claimed that the band system is realistic, with more luxurious goods travelling greater distances (including frequently by land routes, despite Tyre’s fame as a sea port). It is possible that items were added to the band they fit into ideologically, rather than based strictly on their place of origin. It is difficult to imagine how or why *tēkēlet* would have been imported from land-locked Upper Mesopotamia. Yet *tēkēlet* as a manufactured, luxury good fits with the other imports from Tyre’s third band of economic influence. Since Tyre would have had no interest in mentioning their exports (the payment they provided in exchange for their “tribute”), it made sense to attribute prestige items to other places of origin.

Further evidence for the Assyrians’ love of blue is provided by their use of the colour in wall reliefs. Both the eighth-century BCE wall-paintings at Til Barsip (Fig. 11) and the ninth-century BCE orthostat reliefs in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud retain traces of

---

<sup>426</sup> Mario Liverani, “The Trade Network of Tyre According to Ezek 27,” in Cogan and Eph’al, *Ah, Assyria*, 65-79.

extensive use of a pigment called “Egyptian blue,” a colour ranging from turquoise to deep blue depending on how much was applied.<sup>427</sup> At Til Barsip, where the coloured paint has been most fully reconstructed, the Assyrians are depicted wearing patterns of blue, red, white, and black. Pauline Albenda suggests that where a specific pattern of blue and white check was used on clothing, it was meant to emphasize a bright blue colour like *takiltu*, whereas a red and blue check represented *argamannu*.<sup>428</sup> The Assyrian rulers’ preference for blue and purple garments in tribute, as well as in self-depictions on palace walls, may well explain why Ezekiel’s author associated Assyrian “governors and commanders” with the colour.

However, elite Judeans would have been no strangers to *tēkēlet* themselves. It appears many times in the Hebrew Bible, though nearly always in association with religious practices. *Tēkēlet* is the colour of the priests’ garments;<sup>429</sup> the Tabernacle curtains<sup>430</sup> and furnishings;<sup>431</sup> Temple adornments (2 Chron 2:7, 14; 3:14); and the cord placed at the corner of each man’s robe to remind him of Yahweh’s commandments (Num 15:38). If *tēkēlet* is mentioned in non-sacred contexts in the Hebrew Bible, it is always outside of Israel, such as the garments traded in Tyre (Ezek 27:7, 24) or the

---

<sup>427</sup> Shiyanthi Thavapalan, Jens Stenger, and Carol Snow, “The Meaning of Color in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Case of Egyptian Blue,” *ZA* 106/2 (2016), 198-214 (204).

<sup>428</sup> Pauline Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting in the Art of the Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 62.

<sup>429</sup> In general (Ex 28:5; 39:1); the ephod (along with gold, purple, and crimson; Ex 28:6; 39:2-3); the band of the ephod (Ex 28:8; 39:5); the breast-piece (Ex 28:15; 39:8); the cord tying the breast-piece to the ephod (Ex 28:28; 39:21); the robe (entirely of blue; Ex 28:31; 39:22); pomegranates on the hem of the robe (Ex 28:33; 39:24); the cord tying the gold rosette to the turban (Ex 28:37; 39:31); the sashes for Aaron’s sons’ tunics (Ex 39:29).

<sup>430</sup> With purple and scarlet: Ex 26:1, 4, 31, 36; 27:16; 36:8, 11, 35, 37; 38:18.

<sup>431</sup> Entirely blue cloth covering the Ark: Num 4:6; table of the bread of Presence: Num 4:7; lampstand: Num 4:9; altar: Num 4:11; vessels: Num 4:12.

Persian trappings of royalty in Esther 1:6 and 8:15. This could suggest that non-cultic use of *tēkēlet* represented a boundary marker between Judeans and other peoples.



Fig. 11  
Assyrian soldiers.  
Drawing of wall panel at Til  
Barsip.<sup>432</sup>

Only sparse archaeological remains of blue-dyed fabric from Iron II Israel have been unearthed. These come from the late-ninth or early-eighth century BCE site of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,<sup>433</sup> where linen garments with blue line decorations were discovered.<sup>434</sup> Linen decorated with various colours was what the Israelite priests’ clothes were made of

<sup>432</sup> Andre Parrot, *Nineveh and Babylon*, xvii (reconstitution of drawing made by Lucien Cavro at Til Barsip).

<sup>433</sup> Israel Carmi and Dror Segal, “<sup>14</sup>C Dates from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” in *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, ed. Ze’ev Meshel (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 61-63.

<sup>434</sup> Avigail Sheffer and Amalia Tidhar, “Textiles and Basketry,” in Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud*, 289-311 (301-307).

according to Exodus 28 and 39, and Kuntillet 'Ajrud is a site where religious activity may have taken place.<sup>435</sup> Additionally, scroll covers with similar blue linen thread decorations have been found at Qumran, dating to the first century CE. Yet without more evidence, it is impossible to say whether blue-dyed fabrics were strictly limited to religious functions in Judah. The garments from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Qumran were dyed with plant-based indigo and not true *tēkēlet*, which was much costlier. Irving Ziderman, who did extensive research into the chemical makeup of *tēkēlet* dye, claims that it would have been priced similarly to gold. Therefore, even if it were accessible to lay people in Judah, few would have been able to afford it.

The religious use of *tēkēlet* is supported by evidence from the Neo-Babylonian period. References to divine statues, particularly of Shamash, reveal that they were clothed in *takiltu* wool. YOS 3 94:7-10, an extract from a letter of two sons to their father, says:

<sup>md</sup>UTU-DINGIR-ú-a <sup>LÚ</sup>UŠ.BAR *a-na pa-ni ab-i-ni ni-il-tap-par*  
*1/3 ma-na 1/2 ma-na ta-kil-ti ina ŠU<sup>(2)</sup>-šú a-na dul-lu šá <sup>d</sup>UTU EN lu-[še-bi-la]*  
*ia-a-nu[-ú] dul-la-šú i-na la ta-kil(!)-tú i-baṭ-ṭil*

We have sent Shamash-iluya, the weaver, to our father. May the lord send 1/3 mina, 1/2 mina of *takiltu* in his hands for the work of Shamash. If not, his work will cease for lack of *takiltu*.<sup>436</sup>

A description of idols in Jeremiah 10:9 similarly states that “their clothing is blue and purple” (*tēkēlet wē'argāmān lēbûšām*). This could support the notion that *tēkēlet* used outside of the Yahweh cult was viewed with suspicion by the biblical writers, including

---

<sup>435</sup> Ze'ev Meshel, “The Nature of the Site and its Biblical Background,” in Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud*, 65-69 (66).

<sup>436</sup> Erich Ebeling, *Neubabylonische Briefe aus Uruk*, BKRvO 1-4 (Berlin: Ebeling, 1930), 78-79.

perhaps when it was worn by Assyrian elites. One reason for this may be found in 2 Kings 18:16-17, which says that King Hezekiah paid the Assyrians tribute taken from the Temple in order to avoid the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>437</sup> In Sennacherib's list of the tribute Hezekiah gave him, many luxury items are included, one of which is *takiltu*:

<sup>55</sup>*šu-ú mha-za-qi-a-ú pu-ul-ḫi me-lam-me be-lu-ti-ia is-ḫu-pu-šú-ma LÚ.úr-bi LÚ.ERIM.MEŠ-šú SIG<sub>5</sub>.MEŠ ša a-na dun-nu-un URU.ur-sa-li-im-mu URU LUGAL-ti-šú ú-še-ri-bu-ma ir-šu-u til-la-a-te*  
<sup>56</sup>*30 GUN KÙ.GI 8 ME GUN KÙ.BABBAR ni-siq-ti gu-uḫ-li ták-kàs-si NA<sub>4</sub>.AN.ZA.GUL.ME GAL.MEŠ GIŠ.NÁ.MEŠ ZÚ GIŠ.GU.ZA.MEŠ né-me-di ZÚ KUŠ AM.SI GIŠ.TÚG lu-bul-ti bir-me TÚG.GADA SÍG.ta-kil-tú SÍG.ar-ga-man-nu*  
<sup>57</sup>*ú-nu-ut ZABAR AN.BAR URUDU AN.NA AN.BAR GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ ga-ba-bi az-ma-re-e si-ri-ia-am GÍR.MEŠ AN.BAR šib-bi til-pa-ni u uš-ši til-li ú-nu-ut ta-ḫa-zi šá ni-ba la i-šu-ú*  
<sup>58</sup>*it-ti DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ-šú MUNUS.UN.MEŠ É.GAL-šú LÚ.NAR.MEŠ MUNUS.NAR.MEŠ a-na qé-reb NINA.KI URU be-lu-ti-ia EGIR-ia ú-še-bi-lam-ma a-na na-dan man-da-at-ti ù e-peš ARAD-ú-ti iš-pu-ra rak-bu-šú*

As for Hezekiah, fear of my lordship's *melammu* overwhelmed him, so he sent after me to Nineveh, the city of my lordship: his auxiliary forces and elite troops (whom he had brought in order to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, acquiring reinforcements), <sup>56</sup>30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large unworked blocks of [unknown type of stone], beds and armchairs of ivory, elephant skins and ivory, ebony, boxwood, multicoloured garments, linen, *takiltu* wool, *argamannu* wool, <sup>57</sup>bronze, copper, tin, [and] iron utensils, chariots, shields, lances, armour, iron belt-daggers, bows, arrows, military equipment, utensils for battle without number, <sup>58</sup>along with his daughters, the women of his palace, [and] male and female musicians, and he sent his messenger to give [me] the payment and serve [me] (RINAP 3 Sennacherib 4, 55-58).

Thus, Ezekiel's use of the term *tēkēlet* may evoke the cultural memory of the Assyrians stripping the Temple and defiling its sacred objects through profane use.

In Ezekiel 23:12, the Assyrians are described again, but this time instead of being *lēbušē tēkēlet* ("clothed in blue"), they are *lēbūšē miklōl*. It is not clear exactly what *miklōl* means: some interpreters see it as a corruption of *tēkēlet*, since the two middle

<sup>437</sup> Although 2 Kgs 18 only mentions gold and no other precious materials.



letters are the same, and the Greek translates it as “with a fine purple border” (ἐνπάρυφος). However, *miklôl* occurs another time: in Ezekiel 38:4, also in the context of military dress. Here the Greek has θώραξ, “breastplates,” and it is probably for this reason that many English versions translate both instances of *miklôl* as “armour.”

However, there is an Akkadian cognate, *maklulu* or *muklālu*, which refers to a woollen shawl or cape with or without sleeves. During the Middle Assyrian period, this garment seems to have been worn for travel and work, but in the Neo-Assyrian era certain administrative texts refer to the *maklulu* being decorated with a red front. One *maklulu* has precious stones sewn into it, suggesting a more valuable item of clothing.<sup>438</sup> In some cuneiform texts, this garment is worn by the king,<sup>439</sup> and in others, such as BAM 234, it can be made of coloured wool and used to clothe ritual figurines.<sup>440</sup> If *miklôl* has a similar meaning to its cognate *maklulu*, it could be intended as a parallel term to *tēkēlet* in Ezekiel 23.

In Ezekiel 27:24, the word *maklul* is used, a *hapax* in the Hebrew Bible probably influenced by the Akkadian term.<sup>441</sup> It is glossed with the phrase *gēlômê tēkēlet wēriqmā*. The word *gēlôm* is also a *hapax* of uncertain meaning, but its Aramaic cognate *gelīma* refers to a sleeveless cloak.<sup>442</sup> Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Akkadian have the

---

<sup>438</sup> SAA 7 96 and 105.

<sup>439</sup> E.g. KBo 9 43:27

<sup>440</sup> Manfred Görg, “Prachtgewänder für Tyrus: Ein Hapax in Ez 27:24,” BN 17 (1982), 35-36.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 560.

word *gulēnu*, probably loaned from West Semitic,<sup>443</sup> especially considering the prominence of garments taken as tribute from Syria-Palestine. In some Neo-Assyrian administrative texts, *gulēnu* refers to a linen garment with a red front-piece, the same as the *maklul*, and it could form part of the uniform for soldiers and palace personnel.<sup>444</sup>

Therefore, the Hebrew phrase *gēlômê tēkēlet wēriqmâ* from Ezekiel 27 could be translated “blue, embroidered cloaks.” This means that the Hebrew word *maklul*, like its Akkadian cognate, was used of colourful, embroidered outerwear, and the similar term *miklôl* probably meant the same. Such clothing corresponds to the depictions of Assyrian officials and royalty wearing intricately-patterned fabrics on wall reliefs at Nimrud, Til Barsip, Khorsabad, and Nineveh. Peter Bartl conducted a close study of these garments at Nimrud, and concluded that they probably represent woven or embroidered pieces of fabric, sometimes with metal appliques, attached to the hems of cloaks.<sup>445</sup> Some such metal appliques have been discovered among textile remains in graves, mostly golden rosettes with holes around the edge for sewing. Therefore, the description of the Assyrians in Ezekiel 23 evokes the image of smartly-attired officials showing visible signs of their prestige.

This is also supported by the metaphor in Ezekiel 16, where the woman representing Judah has her own luxury garments. Neither *tēkēlet* nor *šāšar* are mentioned, but she is

---

<sup>443</sup> CAD g

<sup>444</sup> SAA 7 96, 98, 107; Salvatore Gaspa, “Garments, Parts of Garments, and Textile Techniques in the Assyrian Terminology: The Neo-Assyrian Textile Lexicon in the 1st Millennium BC Linguistic Context,” in *Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD*, ed. Salvatore Gaspa, Cécile Michel, and Marie-Louise Nosch (Lincoln, NE: Zea Books, 2017), 47-90 (70-71).

<sup>445</sup> Peter Vinzenz Bartl, *Die Ritzverzierungen auf den Relieforthostaten Assurnasirpals II aus Kalḫu* (Darmstadt: Philipp von Zabern, 2014), 83-87.

given embroidered cloth (*riqmā*), linen (*šēš*), and silk (*mešī*), as well as an abundance of jewellery (Ezek 16:10, 13). However, she uses some of her garments to make shrines (16:16), and others to clothe the images she makes out of her gold and silver (16:17-18). Margaret Odell interprets these images as the Neo-Assyrian royal statues placed in their vassal territories to indicate imperial control. Jerusalem's willing offering of luxury items to these foreign statues symbolizes the draining of her resources at the hands of the Assyrian kings (as evidenced in their tribute lists).<sup>446</sup> The end result is that she is stripped naked and left without any adornment whatsoever (16:39), while the Assyrians wear the blue garments they seized from her.

### 2.3.2 Egypt

In Ezekiel 17:7 Egypt is an eagle; in 31:18, it is a great tree, and in 29:3-5 and 32:2-8 it is a sea monster. Imposing these non-human attributes on Egypt is Ezekiel's way of "othering" a nation with which he wishes Judah would not interact. For example, in Chapters 29 and 32, Ezekiel uses *Mischwesen* (lion and serpent) imagery to portray the Pharaoh as a terrifying agent of chaos.<sup>447</sup>

דָּבָר וְאַמְרָתָּהּ כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנְנִי עֹלֶיךָ פָּרְעָה מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם הַתַּנִּים הַגְּדֹל הַרְבֵּץ בְּתוֹךְ יִאֲרֹוּ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יִאֲרִי וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי: וְנִמְתָּי סַחֲיִים [סַחֲיִים] בְּלַחֲיָהּ וְהִדְבַקְתִּי דַגְתִּי־יִאֲרִיָּה בְּקַשְׁקֻשְׁתֶּיהָ וְהַעֲלִיתִיָּהּ מִתּוֹךְ יִאֲרִיָּה וְאֵת כָּל־דַּגְתִּי יִאֲרִיָּה בְּקַשְׁקֻשְׁתֶּיהָ תִּדְבֹּק: וְנִטְשְׁתִּיהָ הַמִּדְבָּרָה אוֹתָהּ וְאֵת כָּל־דַּגְתִּי יִאֲרִיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה תִּפּוֹל לֹא תִּסָּקֵף וְלֹא תִקְבָּץ לְחַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְלַעֹרֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם נִמְתִּיהָ לְאַכְלָהּ:

<sup>446</sup> Margaret Odell, "Fragments of Traumatic Memory: *šalmê zākār* and Child Sacrifice in Ezekiel 16:15-22," in *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, ed. Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016), 107-124 (114, 117).

<sup>447</sup> Lewis ("CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32," 38-41, 46-47) shows that lions and serpents were parallel creatures of terror in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 91:13; Isa 30:6; Amos 5:19) and lion/dragon *Mischwesen* occur in Mesopotamian texts and art-historical representations (e.g. the *labbu* in CT 13.33-34 and the *mušḫuššu* dragon depicted on the Ishtar Gate).

Speak and say, “The Lord Yahweh says this: ‘I am against you, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon who lies in his Nile-streams, who says, “My Nile is mine and I made it.”’<sup>4</sup> I will set hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your Nile-streams cling to your scales. I will lift you out of your Nile-streams with all the fish of your Nile-streams clinging to your scales.<sup>5</sup> I will forsake you to the wilderness with all the fish of your Nile-streams. You will fall on the open field; you will not be gathered or collected. I will give you as food to the animals of the earth and the birds of the sky”’ (Ezek 29:3-5).

בְּנֶאֱדָם שָׂא קִינָה עַל־פְּרֻעָה מִלֶּד־מִצְרַיִם וְאִמְרַת אֱלֹיו כְּפִיר גֹּזִים נִדְמִית וְאַתָּה כְּתַנִּים בַּיָּמִים וְתַגַּח בְּנִהְרוֹתֶיךָ וְתַדְלַח־מִיָּם בְּרִגְלֶיךָ וְתִרְפָּס נִהְרוֹתָם: כֹּה אָמַר אֱדֹנִי יְהוָה וּפְרַשְׁתִּי עָלֶיךָ אֶת־רִשְׁתִּי בַקָּהֶל עַמִּים רַבִּים וְהֶעָלוּךָ בְּחֶרֶם: וְנִטְשְׁתִּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה אֲטִילָךְ וְהִשְׁכַּנְתִּי עָלֶיךָ כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִמָּדָה חַיַּת כָּל־הָאֶרֶץ: וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־בְּשָׂרְךָ עַל־הַהָרִים וּמִלֵּאתִי הַגְּאִיּוֹת רְמוֹתָי: וְהִשְׁקִיתִי אֶרֶץ צָפְתָּךְ מִדְּמָדָה אֶל־הַהָרִים וְאֶפְקִים יִמְלֵאוּן מִמָּדָה: וְכִסִּיתִי בְּכַבֹּתָהּ שָׁמַיִם וְהִקְדַּרְתִּי אֶת־כְּבִיבָהֶם שָׁמַשׁ בְּעָנָן אֶכְסְנוּ וַיֵּרֶם לֹא־יֵאִיר אוֹרוֹ: כָּל־מְאוּרֵי אוֹר בְּשָׁמַיִם אֶקְדִּירֶם עָלֶיךָ וְנָתַתִּי חֹשֶׁךְ עַל־אֶרֶצְךָ נָאִם אֱדֹנִי יְהוָה:

Son of man, raise a lament over Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and say to him: “You are considered a young lion<sup>448</sup> of the nations and you are like a dragon in the seas. You cause your rivers to burst forth and trouble water with your feet and pollute their rivers.<sup>3</sup> The Lord Yahweh says this: ‘I will spread my net upon you with a crowd of many peoples and they will lift you with my dragnet.’<sup>4</sup> I will forsake you on the land; I will hurl you on the open field. I will cause all the birds of the sky to dwell on you and cause the animals of the earth to sate themselves with you.<sup>5</sup> I will set your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your carcass.<sup>6</sup> I will cause the land to drink your outflow from your blood up to the mountains; the ravines will be full of you.<sup>7</sup> When you have quenched (it), I will cover the sky and cause its stars to be dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon will not shine its light.<sup>8</sup> I will darken all the lights of the sky’s light over you and I will set darkness over your land.’ The declaration of the Lord Yahweh” (Ezek 32:2-8).

These passages find parallels in other West Semitic descriptions of gods’ battles against sea monsters. For example, the Ugaritic text describing Baal’s battle against Yam (Ugaritic for “Sea;” KTU 1.1-2) as well as the *tnn* dragon (KTU 1.82.1).<sup>449</sup> This

<sup>448</sup> This is the most common translation of the Hebrew *kēpîr*, but in two places in the Hebrew Bible the LXX translates this word *drakōn* (Job 4:10 and 38:39); Lewis, “CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32,” 38 n. 70.

<sup>449</sup> The *tannîn* occurs in parallel to Yam in Job 7:12. Anat also battles the *tnn* dragon in KTU 1.3.3.37-39. Lewis suggests that the term *tannîn* in Ezek 29:3 and 32:2 is either a by-form of the usual *tannîn*, the cognate of Ugaritic *tnn*, or a confusion based on the Hebrew plural *-îm* ending (Lewis, “CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32,” 38-39).

condemnation of Egypt was particularly poignant since longstanding Egyptian tradition held that the Pharaoh upheld *ma'at*, order, in Egypt by protecting Egypt's boundaries. In so doing, the Pharaoh was supposed to keep chaotic forces in the form of foreign nations at bay. Here, Ezekiel portrays the Pharaoh as a force of chaos itself, breaking the essential boundary between water and land (Ezek 32:2) in his arrogance. Ezekiel's view of Egypt was informed by the nation's interference in the politics of the southern Levant: agitating first Jehoiachin and then Zedekiah to rebel against Babylonian rule, ultimately leading to Judah's downfall.

Safwat Marzouk writes of Ezekiel 29 and 32 that the portrayal of Egypt as a sea monster creates a sense of horror regarding this foreign nation, in opposition to the human "normalcy" of the Judeans: "As the society seeks to reconstruct its identity and to establish a given norm and an accepted structure, it 'abjects' the monster and it ascribes to it a transgressive body that cannot be integrated into its presupposed borders and boundaries."<sup>450</sup> In this way, Ezekiel seeks to ensure that the Judeans do not mistake Egypt for an ally again, but regard the nation with fear and disgust.

The only time Ezekiel portrays the Egyptians as human men occurs in 23:20-21, and even then, their body parts are compared to those of animals. The writer states that their "members were like those of donkeys, and emission like that of stallions." Greenberg suggests this is a metaphor for what was considered excessive sexual desire or lewd activity.<sup>451</sup> It may reflect a Judean stereotype concerning Egyptians; in Ezekiel 16:26, in a

---

<sup>450</sup> Safwat Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 48-49.

<sup>451</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 480. T.M. Lemos notes that although comparison to animals could be negative, in this case it seems to be positive due to the association between large genitalia and masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and wider ancient Near Eastern context (T.M. Lemos, "The Emasculation of Exile:

similar context, the Egyptians are described as *gidlê bāsār*, “great of flesh,” a phrase not used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible but evidently referring to sexual excess of some kind. In Ezekiel 16 and 23, all of the sexual activity is portrayed as lewd and excessive, so it is difficult to say why the Egyptians might be singled out. It is interesting that the imperial powers of Assyria and Babylon are represented by armed men in fine clothes, whereas the Egyptians are not.

Perhaps the Egyptians’ failure to gain any kind of stable control over Judah or save them from Babylonian attack led Ezekiel to portray them this way. Their reputation for potency, like their reputation for beauty (32:19) and greatness (31:18), which originally attracted the Judeans, did not prove to be effective where it really counted. Thus, the Judeans’ pandering to Egypt is extremely distasteful to Ezekiel, to the extent that he compares it to bestiality. By portraying Egyptians as having different bodies to the Judeans, he makes them disgusting and completely removed from a Judean identity.

The horrifying monstrification of Egypt and the threat it poses to Judah’s future security is resolved for Ezekiel by Yahweh’s defeat of the chaotic being. Before the trauma is resolved, however, it is increased: monster Egypt’s body parts are scattered all over the land: its flesh on the mountains, its carcass in the valleys (32:5), its blood in the land and ravines (32:6).<sup>452</sup> Once devoid of their chaotic inhabitant, the waters of Egypt will be calm again: “the rivers will run like oil” (32:14), order will be restored.<sup>453</sup>

---

Hypermasculinity and Feminization in the Book of Ezekiel,” in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, AIL 10 [Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011], 377-94 [381-82, 387]).

<sup>452</sup> Cf. Ezek 39:4-5

<sup>453</sup> Cf. Ps 29:3-10

In keeping with this portrayal, the Egyptians are included on the list of those who will be laid to rest among uncircumcised peoples in Ezekiel 31:18 and 32:19-21. This category of foreign nations is discussed below (Section 2.3.5) along with the other “uncircumcised nations, killed by the sword.” It is worth noting that Egyptians did commonly practice circumcision, so the concept of being buried among the uncircumcised was probably intentionally offensive, as well as further reinforcing their separation from the Judeans.

### 2.3.3 The Question of Gog

There is one foreign representative, mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39, that remains mysterious: Gog of Magog. Scholars have long debated whether this enigmatic character represents a nation contemporary with Ezekiel or an imagined eschatological enemy. As Casey Strine points out, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive: eschatological enemies are usually inspired by contemporary ones. Strine sees Gog as a subversive representation of Marduk as the force of chaos which Yahweh defeats.<sup>454</sup> Julie Galambush also sees Gog as a representation of Babylon, but as their human leader, Nebuchadnezzar, due to similarities in Ezekiel’s descriptions of Gog’s army and the Babylonian one.

As outlined in Section 2.2.3, Ezekiel contains detailed information about Babylonian military practices, and some of those are reflected in Chapters 38-39. Galambush points out that both Nebuchadnezzar and Gog come from the North (26:7; 23:24 [LXX only];

---

<sup>454</sup> Strine, “*Chaoskampf* Against Empire: YHWH’s Battle Against Gog (Ezekiel 38-39) as Resistance Literature,” in *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, ed. Alan Lenzi and Jonathan Stökl (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014), 87-108 (89).

38:15; 39:2); both lead a host (*qāhāl*; 16:40; 23:24ff.; 26:7; 32:3; 38:4, 15) comprising many peoples (‘*am rab* or ‘*ammîm rabbîm*; 26:7; 32:3; 38:6ff); and both take spoil and seize plunder (combination of *šll* and *bzz*; 26:12; 29:19; 38:12-13).<sup>455</sup>

However, these connections are fairly generic. Anja Klein noted that there are lexical links between Gog and many of the foreign nations in Ezekiel 23 and 25-32, including the Assyrians and the Egyptians.<sup>456</sup> Based on this observation, Lydia Lee concludes that Gog represents all the nations with whom Judah was previously allied. Since Ezekiel 23 presents Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as Judah’s former allies, Lee noted similarities between the military practices of Gog and those of the Assyrian and Babylonian combined forces in Ezekiel 23: both have horses and horsemen (*sûsîm ûpārâšîm*; 38:4; 23:6, 12, 23; 26:7, 10), wear the *miklôl* garment (38:4; 23:34); and carry bucklers and shields (*šinnâ ûmāgēn*; 38:4; 23:24).<sup>457</sup>

Lee also sees lexical links between Gog and the depiction of the Egyptian Pharaoh in Ezekiel 29-32, including the body of the enemy being cast into an open field to be devoured by carrion (39:4-5; 29:5; 32:4-5) and its eventual burial (*qbr*; 39:11-16; 32:22-26); as well as the use of the phrase “on that day” (Ezek 38:10; 29:21; 30:9), although this is a generic phrase used in judgement oracles across many prophetic books.<sup>458</sup> The lack of a swift and proper burial, and especially the consumption of bodies by wild

---

<sup>455</sup> Julie Galambush, “Necessary Enemies: Nebuchadnezzar, YHWH, and Gog in Ezekiel 38-39,” in *Israel’s Prophets and Israel’s Past*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 254-67 (259).

<sup>456</sup> Klein, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch*, 127-39.

<sup>457</sup> Lydia Lee, “The Enemies Within: Gog of Magog in Ezekiel 38-39,” *HTS Teologiese Studies* (2017), 1-7 (3). The *miklôl* is particularly significant since it only appears in Ezekiel 38:4 and 23:34.

<sup>458</sup> Lee, “The Enemies Within,” 4.



animals, was a symbol of shame and defilement in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East. For example, 2 Kings 9:36-37 has the wicked queen Jezebel's body eaten by dogs before it could be retrieved. As such, it is unclear whether Ezekiel's threat that Gog would not be buried specifically evoked comparison to Egypt.

By contrast, one of the practices attributed to Gog's army in Ezekiel 38:4 is distinctly Mesopotamian: the *miklôl* garment (discussed above in Section 2.3.1). This loanword from Akkadian *maklulu* refers to a luxury garment often worn by palace personnel or even kings; in Ezekiel 23:12 it is worn by the Assyrian officials whom Oholibah desires. Additionally, as Tooman notes, there is an exact inversion in the order of the three military items listed in both Chapter 23 and 38: the *miklôl* garment, the horsemen, and the army in 23:12, and the other way around in 38:4.<sup>459</sup> This may have been an effective way to signal to Ezekiel's audience that the army of Gog represents Mesopotamian troops without it being too obvious. The connections between Ezekiel 23:12 and 38:4 are not strong enough to say whether there is supposed to be a one-to-one correspondence between Gog and Assyria specifically. On the one hand, Judeans had historical reasons to despise Assyria; on the other, the Neo-Assyrian empire had already met its end by Ezekiel's lifetime.

Casey Strine suggests, based on James C. Scott's framework of subaltern groups and their practices of resistance, that Ezekiel's oracles concerning Gog are "hidden transcripts" in the context of Neo-Babylonian subjugation.<sup>460</sup> This means that Ezekiel

---

<sup>459</sup> Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 42.

<sup>460</sup> Strine, "Chaokampf Against Empire," 95; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 120-24.

uses these oracles to communicate his desire for the downfall of Babylon to his fellow exiles without the meaning of the message being evident to the Babylonians. For Strine, the similarities between the descriptions of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39 and the descriptions of Marduk in *Enūma eliš* are the indicators that Gog represents Babylon as a chaos monster whom Yahweh will slay.<sup>461</sup>

In the context of the sixth-century BCE forced migrations, Babylon is the most appealing suggestion for the identity of Gog. Yet without any definitive evidence, Gog's specific identity (if any) remains conjecture. His representation of Judah's foreign enemies can only inform Ezekiel's general desire for the downfall of the nations who threaten Judah's identity and existence.

### 2.3.4 The Uncircumcised Nations

One bodily practice, or lack thereof, which several of the foreign nations in Ezekiel have in common is that they are said to be uncircumcised. In Ezekiel 32:18-30, Elam, Meshech-Tubal, the "princes of the north," and Sidon are all described as uncircumcised, whilst Egypt, Assyria, and Edom are threatened with being laid to rest among the uncircumcised. Circumcision became one of the most significant bodily practices that marked the boundary between Judeans and non-Judeans. Whilst there is evidence of the circumcision of infants from seventh-century BCE Judah, many scholars believe it only became a significant marker of Judean identity during the exilic period.<sup>462</sup> Most of

---

<sup>461</sup> Strine, "*Chaoskampf* Against Empire," 99-100, 106.

<sup>462</sup> Robert G. Hall, "Circumcision," *ABD* 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1025-31 (1026); Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 107; "More and Less than a Myth," 31; Rüdiger Schmitt, "Rites of Family and Household Religion," in *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant*, ed. Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 387-426 (393-95). The original meaning of the bodily modification is much debated. Popular interpretations include that it was a fertility practice or a

Judah's neighbours in the Levant (with the exception of the Philistines) also practised circumcision, so it would not have been a particularly Judean identity marker before the exile. Since the Babylonians and Assyrians did not commonly practice circumcision, a period of Mesopotamian domination would make sense as a time when the practice became an important identity marker for the Judeans.<sup>463</sup>

It is significant that Ezekiel 32 lists Assyria, Egypt, and Edom as nations which will lie among the uncircumcised, not as the uncircumcised themselves. There is evidence that circumcision was practised in Egypt and Edom, and Ezekiel seems to have been aware of these traditions.<sup>464</sup> What is strange is the inclusion of Assyria on this list. It could have been a misconception on the writer's part, an error in textual transmission (especially given the repetitive nature of the passage), or a reluctance to openly declare the Mesopotamians' otherness in this regard.

Merely being in close proximity to uncircumcised peoples was sufficient cause for impurity according to Ezekiel. In 44:6-7, the admission of foreigners, "uncircumcised in heart and flesh" ('*arlê lēb wě'arlê bāsār*) to the Temple is an abomination (*tô 'ēbā*) which profanes (*ḥll*). Therefore, in 44:9 all foreigners "uncircumcised in heart and flesh" are definitively banned from the Temple. Some scholars, such as Michael Konkel, have

---

demonstration of ritual obedience (based on Gen 17:6-11); an apotropaic ritual (based on Exod 4:24-26); a marriage ritual (based on Exod 4:24-26 and Gen 34); or a rite of coming-of-age (based on Gen 17:25; Josh 5:2-9): Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 181; Schmitt, "Rites of Family and Household Religion," 393-95; Stavrakopoulou, "Making Bodies," 535.

<sup>463</sup> Alberty, *Israel in Exile*, 107; Schmitt, "Rites of Family and Household Religion," 393. There is archaeological evidence that circumcision was practised in Syria as early as the third millennium BCE. It was most likely adopted by the Israelites in the early stages of their existence as a national group, but may have only been interpreted as a mandatory identity marker during the exilic period (Hall, "Circumcision," 1025, 1027).

<sup>464</sup> Cf. Jer 9:25 (Heb.). Hall, "Circumcision," 1025; Alberty, *Israel in Exile*, 107; Schmitt, "Rites of Family and Household Religion," 393.

suggested that this passage is a fourth-century BCE addition to Ezekiel in response to Nehemiah 13:1, which bans foreigners (especially Ammonites and Moabites) from the post-exilic Temple.<sup>465</sup> The discovery that Tobiah the Ammonite had a room in the Jerusalem Temple provoked an angry response from Nehemiah, who describes the situation as an evil (*rā'ā*) necessitating cleansing (*thr*). In Konkelt's view, the author of Ezekiel 44:6-9 wrote in support of the Zadokite circle who controlled the Second Temple.

It is not necessary to posit that the writer of Ezekiel 44:6-9 knew Nehemiah 13 in order to believe that foreigners would pollute the Temple. Ezekiel considers Babylonia to be unclean (*tāmē'*) to the point of polluting the food the Judeans eat there (4:13).<sup>466</sup> In his vision of the Temple in Chapter 8, he witnesses various foreign ritual practices taking place and defiling the Temple (see Section 3.2.1). Nevertheless, Christophe Nihan suggests that Ezekiel 44:6-9 is in dialogue with Trito-Isaiah. This post-exilic writer takes the view that proselytes entering the Temple is a sign that Yahweh has taken over the Persian king's role as the ruler of foreign nations, as promised. In Isaiah 56-66, it is the worshippers' loyalty to Yahweh which allows them access to the Judean community and the Temple, not their ancestry or traditions such as circumcision (e.g. Isa 56:1-8). Nihan believes that Ezekiel 44 was written in the post-exilic period in defence of the exclusionary practices of the Second Temple priesthood. In his view, the writer of Ezekiel 44 felt that these practices were under attack from those who agreed with the

---

<sup>465</sup> Konkelt, *Architektonik des Heiligen*, 99-110.

<sup>466</sup> Christophe Nihan, "Ethnicity and Identity in Isaiah 56-66," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 67-104 (80).

principles of Trito-Isaiah.<sup>467</sup> However, it is important to note that Ezekiel 44 bans those “uncircumcised in heart *and* flesh” from the Temple. Loyalty to Yahweh was as much a prerequisite for entry as physical circumcision.<sup>468</sup> The criteria of circumcision and Judean ancestry did not stand alone.

Some consider Ezekiel 40-48 to be a later addition to the rest of the book,<sup>469</sup> meaning it is possible that its discussion about who may enter the new Temple refers to an ongoing dispute in the Second Temple period. However, it is important to note that the writer of Ezekiel 32 also views circumcision, or the lack thereof, as a practice which sets other nations apart from Israel. Ezekiel’s aversion to being proximate with these foreigners is revealed through his evocation of being laid to rest among uncircumcised peoples as a punishment. Again, the lack of mention of Babylon is telling. Ezekiel may have considered it wiser to avoid openly predicting the imperial power’s demise and burial among “unclean” peoples. The mention of the uncircumcised nations lying in a communal grave would likely have been sufficient to convey this predicted outcome to his audience.

## 2.4 Conclusions

Ezekiel uses a variety of methods to convey the boundaries between his community and the foreign nations. Whether by describing everyday activities such as getting dressed, more obviously ritually-charged practices like circumcision and divination, or

---

<sup>467</sup> Nihan, “Ethnicity and Identity in Isaiah 56-66,” 85.

<sup>468</sup> Similarly, Jer 4:4 refers to “the foreskin of your hearts,” whilst 9:25-26 claims that “the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart,” suggesting this concept was familiar in sixth-century BCE Judean thought.

<sup>469</sup> See Nevader, “Picking up the Pieces,” 268-70 (especially n.3, 6) for a discussion of the different contributions to this issue.

the extremes of non-human bodies or body parts, Ezekiel portrays foreigners as being far outside of the Judean community. Sometimes his descriptions reveal a close familiarity with the practices of other peoples, whereas elsewhere they seem designed to create a general impression rather than reproduce the real practices of a community. Xenophobia typically does not concern itself with accuracy, and Ezekiel plays on xenophobic emotions, primarily those of fear and disgust.

Although Ezekiel adopted Babylonian loan words and literary tropes without comment, he utilized other Babylonian social practices to emphasize their ethnic otherness from the Judeans. Ezekiel stirred up fear of the Babylonians through his lengthy and detailed descriptions of their military practices, which represented an ever-present threat to his community. His disgust concerning Babylonia is thinly disguised, including his suggestions that food consumed there is unclean (4:13), that the Babylonians conduct illicit divination practices (21:26-27, Heb.); and that they are idol-worshippers (23:14). Likewise, Ezekiel emphasizes the boundaries between his community and other foreign nations, including the Assyrians, Egyptians, and all the defiling, uncircumcised nations surrounding them in their forced migrant setting (Ezek 32). Ezekiel's response to this situation was to define how the Judean community should identify itself in contrast to other nations. In order to do this, the question of which Judeans belonged to Ezekiel's community had to be decisively answered.

## Chapter Three

### The Body Politic

Having examined Ezekiel's attitude towards other nations, we now turn to the object of his fiercest polemic: the Judeans remaining in Judah. One of Ezekiel's main goals is to portray those who underwent the 597 BCE forced migration as the inheritors of the covenant relationship with Yahweh. This sets them apart from all Judeans outside of that group. To achieve his ideological purpose, Ezekiel draws boundaries between the two groups of Judeans, undermining the factors that had previously united them as a single national-ethnic group. He emphasizes the materiality of their distinct identities in terms of genealogical origins, ritual practices, class structures, and their expected futures of bodily destruction or bodily renewal. In so doing, Ezekiel develops an ideology of a privileged, in-group identity for the Judeans of the 597 BCE migration, systematically alienating those who remained in Judah after this date.<sup>470</sup>

Because this ideology is so pervasive in Ezekiel, some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that the Judeans remaining in Judah were the only outside group Ezekiel cared about. For example, Dalit Rom-Shiloni claims that "the exiles in Babylon continued to negotiate their status in relation to Judeans remaining in the land of Israel, rather than in relation to 'proximate others' – the diverse national groups present in Babylon."<sup>471</sup> The

---

<sup>470</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah;" Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts between the Exiles and the People who Remained (6th-5th Centuries BCE)*, LHBOTS 543 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 139-196; Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 145-48; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 287-305; Nissinen, "(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal its Babylonian Context?" 97; Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In and On Babylon," 101.

<sup>471</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 146.

discussion in Chapter Two reveals that Ezekiel was hardly ambivalent about the “proximate others” the Judeans encountered in the sixth century BCE. Ezekiel considers both the foreign nations and the Judeans remaining in Judah as outsiders against whom his community must define themselves.

The context of the imperial struggles over Judah, which brought it into close contact with foreign nations, cannot be divorced from Ezekiel’s attitude towards the Judeans remaining in Judah. It is the context of empire that caused the forced migrations to take place, splitting the Judeans into several groups. Each group experienced a different type of interaction with foreign nations, influencing the way in which their collective identities developed and diverged from one another. The animosity which arose between the migrant Judeans and those who remained may not have been the goal of the Babylonian forced migrations, but it was a side-effect that made a unified rebellion less likely, furthering Babylonian control over their subjects.

Ezekiel’s condemnation of Judah is harsher than that his portrayal of any other nation. One reason for this may be that forced migrants in Babylonia could speak and write openly about their grievances against their own people, but not against foreign nations, especially Babylon. Another factor was that ideologically, Judah was the most “proximate other” to Ezekiel, and therefore the most threatening to the sense of group identity he sought to create. Indeed, Judah was not an “other” at all, which is why Ezekiel had to work harder to portray it as such.

Ezekiel describes Judah’s wrongdoing in superlative terms. He claims that the nation is so much worse than any other that Yahweh will invite Judah’s neighbours to witness



its humiliating punishment (Ezek 5:5-9).<sup>472</sup> Although Ezekiel does not absolve his community in Babylonia of guilt, the primary target of his vitriol is the Judeans who remained in Judah after the 597 BCE migration.

The division between Ezekiel's community and the Judeans in Judah is revealed most clearly in two disputation speeches: Ezekiel 11:14-21 and 33:23-29. These disclose the heart of the disagreement between those who were forced to migrate in 597 BCE and those who remained: both communities believed themselves to be the continuation of Yahweh's covenant with Israel.<sup>473</sup> Ezekiel had the more difficult task of proving that it was the community which had been removed from the land who would inherit it in the future.

---

<sup>472</sup> Ezekiel 5:6 provides the clue to Jerusalem's guilt: "She has rebelled against my judgements – doing more evil than the nations – and against my statutes more than the lands around her, for they rejected my judgements and did not walk in my statutes." This suggests that the standard Ezekiel uses to determine the evil of a nation is the extent to which it had rebelled against Yahweh's judgements and statutes. It seems unlikely that other nations were judged according to whether they followed Yahweh's laws, which presumably they never knew. The JPS deals with this issue by translating "she rejected my judgements" for *mā'āsū*, referring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem rather than the nations. This would involve a switch from 3 f s to 3 c p to refer to the city within the same sentence, which is possible if uncomfortable.

Yet Moshe Greenberg believes the plain meaning of the MT can be explained by reference to Psalm 147:20: "[Yahweh] has not acted thus towards every nation, so they do not know judgements. Praise Yahweh!" He suggests that Ezekiel's meaning is therefore more likely to be that Jerusalem was more wicked than any other nation precisely because the city was privileged to receive Yahweh's laws and yet still chose to ignore them (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 111).

Ezekiel 5:7 suggests that even following "the judgements of the nations who are around [Jerusalem]," referring to their native, non-Yahwistic laws, produced more favourable results than what Jerusalem did. Jeremiah 2:11 carries a similar sense when it suggests that although the other nations have false deities, at least they, unlike Jerusalem, are faithful to them:

"Has any nation exchanged gods? (And they are not gods!)

Yet my people have exchanged their glory for that which will not profit!"

Likewise, a similar prophecy against Jerusalem occurs in Jeremiah 1:15-16: "For I am calling to all the families of the kingdoms of the north" – an utterance of Yahweh – "So that they will come, and each man will set his seat before the gates of Jerusalem and against all her surrounding walls and all the cities of Judah. I will speak my judgements to them against all their evil in which they forsook me and offered incense to other gods and bowed down to the works of their hands."

<sup>473</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 2.

*Ezekiel, Deuteronomy, the Priestly Writings, and the Holiness Code*

It is evident that Ezekiel's ideological approach to the forced migration is influenced by Judean theological and historical traditions. Many scholars have sought to identify the influence of Pentateuchal or other biblical traditions on Ezekiel's work. If the writer of Ezekiel was a Jerusalemite priest before his forced migration as he claims, he would have been well-educated in Judean religious traditions. There is no doubt these traditions would have influenced his perception of Judean identity. Additionally, drawing on the religious traditions his community shared would have been a way to add authority to his ideology. It is not in the remit of the current project to determine Ezekiel's precise textual relationship to the Deuteronomic (and perhaps Deuteronomistic) writings, the Priestly writings, or the Holiness Code. However, before proceeding, a possible chronology of these works should be discussed.

It appears that, in his efforts to combat the claims of the Judeans who remained in Judah, Ezekiel utilizes Deuteronomic traditions that both groups shared. For example, he frames the Judeans in Judah as the descendants of the Canaanites (Ezek 16:3), and those in Babylonia as the descendants of the Exodus community (Ezek 20:5). The concept of the Exodus as a foundation myth for Yahweh's chosen people was a core element of Deuteronomic ideology.<sup>474</sup> Yet Ezekiel's use of Deuteronomic traditions does not necessarily entail the composition of the book of Deuteronomy prior to the book of Ezekiel; only that the two shared a set of traditions. Whereas scholars such as Risa Levitt

---

<sup>474</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 138.

Kohn posit strong textual links between Ezekiel and Deuteronomy,<sup>475</sup> others, such as Walther Zimmerli, do not hold that Ezekiel's use of the book of Deuteronomy can be proven on a linguistic basis. Ezekiel lacks some of the most common terms used in Deuteronomy even when discussing similar subject matter (such as *mišwâ* and *tôrâ*). However, Ezekiel appears to be aware of the Deuteronomistic reforms and their influence on the development of an Israelite identity, such as the centralization of the Jerusalem Temple and priesthood and the elimination of high places and syncretistic ritual practices.<sup>476</sup> Ezekiel is familiar with and accepting of the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic interpretations of Israel and Judah's history, even if he did not have direct access to those texts.

Another issue of much debate is Ezekiel's relationship to the Priestly (P) writings of the Pentateuch. Scholars have long noted the similarities between the language and theological concerns of Ezekiel and P, including "the holiness of God, the separation of clean and unclean, and the consequences of defilement or pollution."<sup>477</sup> These concerns are most clearly highlighted in Ezekiel 40-48, Ezekiel's vision of the new Temple, which includes a law code for how it is to be maintained.

---

<sup>475</sup> Kohn identifies 21 common terms between Ezekiel and the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic writings (Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah*, JSOT Suppl. 358 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 4, 86-95).

<sup>476</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel I*, 46. Crouch (*The Making of Israel*) outlines how the Deuteronomistic reforms influenced the development of a distinctive Judean identity. One common explanation for the similarities between Ezekiel and D/Dtr has been that a Deuteronomistic school redacted the book of Ezekiel, but Kohn claims this does not sufficiently account for the textual relationship between them (Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 4).

<sup>477</sup> Brad E. Kelle, "Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of the Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel," JBL 128/3 (2009), 469-90 (470).

Ezekiel and P share a distinct literary style, terminology, preoccupation with cultic sanctity and the sacrificial system, and general outlook on the organization of a centralized sanctuary.<sup>478</sup> However, there are also significant differences between the two with regard to the details of Temple organization and ritual.<sup>479</sup> Scholars disagree about whether Ezekiel altered Priestly traditions for the context of the exile or whether the two developed independently from the same school, perhaps both in sixth-century BCE Babylonia.

Despite their similar ideologies and concerns, it seems unlikely that either Ezekiel or the Priestly writer had a copy of the other's work. It is hard to believe that one would adopt all the principles of the other, thus seemingly recognizing its authority, and yet change the details.<sup>480</sup> It is more likely that both writers were drawing upon a similar education in Priestly traditions. If the book of Ezekiel was composed during the forced migration in Babylonia as it claims, it was probably written without access to Judean religious texts (such that existed in sixth-century BCE Jerusalem).

Ezekiel also draws from traditions which reflect those found in the Holiness Code (H: Leviticus 17-26). Since August Klostermann identified it in the late nineteenth

---

<sup>478</sup> Haran, "The Law Code of Ezekiel 40-48," 59; "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," 211. Kohn identifies 97 terms, expressions, and idioms common to Ezekiel and P (*A New Heart and a New Soul*, 30).

<sup>479</sup> Ezekiel envisages a Temple, whereas P talks about the tabernacle, placing great emphasis on furnishings that are absent in Ezekiel: the Ark, the cherubim, lampstands, and vessels. They also differ with regard to the composition of the sacrifices and offerings: the number of animals to be sacrificed as well as the measures of grain and oil offerings. Sometimes the details and frequency of rituals is at odds as well; for example, Ezekiel 45:18-20 commands that the Temple be cleansed twice a year by applying the blood of the bull sacrificed as the sin-offering to various parts of the Temple, which is similar to P's Day of Atonement, except that the latter is to be conducted only once a year with the blood of a bull, a ram, and two goats, the places the blood is to be applied differ slightly, and there is to be a concurrent public fast. Haran, "The Law Code of Ezekiel 40-48," 61-62; "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," 212, 216.

<sup>480</sup> Haran, "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," 212. Though note opposing views, e.g. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 30-85.

century CE, H has traditionally been considered an originally independent legal code that was later edited and incorporated into P.<sup>481</sup> Ezekiel's relationship to the Holiness Code has long been recognized, beginning with K.H. Graf in 1866. Graf noted the many similarities between the two texts even before the term "Holiness Code" had been coined and suggested that the author of Ezekiel wrote Leviticus 18-23 and 25-27.<sup>482</sup>

Although most would not now go as far as positing a single author for Ezekiel and the Holiness Code, there is widespread agreement that the two share a similar ideology. Michael Lyons has convincingly argued that Ezekiel borrowed directly and purposefully from the Holiness Code, using its language and theology to explain the forced migration and predict a future of covenant promise fulfillment for those in Babylonia.<sup>483</sup> However, Kohn contests that there are as many indications of Ezekiel's use of all the Priestly material, so there is no reason to posit a special relationship with H.<sup>484</sup>

The question of whether Ezekiel had access to any of the written texts of the Hebrew Bible or was drawing from similar traditions learned in Jerusalem is one that cannot be

---

<sup>481</sup> A. Klostermann, "Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs," *ZTK* 38 (1877), 401-45. This interpretation has been revised and questioned by many, including significantly by Israel Knohl, who expanded H to include material traditionally considered P and attributed the redaction of the entire Pentateuch to H (*The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995]).

<sup>482</sup> Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1866), 81-83.

<sup>483</sup> Such as Michael A. Lyons, "Transformation of Law: Ezekiel's Use of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26)" in *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*, ed. William A. Tooman and Michael A. Lyons (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd.). For example, Lyons claims that Ezekiel reinterprets the conditional covenant promises in Leviticus 26:4-6, 13 into guaranteed covenant blessings for his community (Ezek 34:25-28; "Transformation of Law," 23-26). If Ezekiel held H as authoritative, it is questionable whether he would undertake such a radical revision of one of its core principles for his own ideology.

<sup>484</sup> Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 85. Rather than drawing any general conclusions, others, like Zimmerli, advocate examining each apparent point of contact between the two texts in its own right. This view is influenced by Zimmerli's opinion that the texts of Ezekiel and the Holiness Code both have complex redaction histories (*Ezekiel* 1, 47).

answered here. What is clear is that Ezekiel knows of some of the same traditions as other biblical writers and utilizes them for his ideological purpose of alienating the Judeans in Judah. Ezekiel particularly makes use of traditions which can be manifested through the composition and practices of the body in order to more effectively create social boundaries between the two communities.

One of the most effective ways Ezekiel does this is by suggesting that the Judeans in Judah and in Babylonia have separate genealogical backgrounds (Section 3.1). For Ezekiel, this distinct genetic makeup manifests in the behaviours of each community. The practices which he attributes to the community in Judah fall into two broad categories: ritual and social. Ezekiel portrays their religious practices as diverging drastically from the exclusive Yahwism required by Yahweh's covenant (Section 3.2).<sup>485</sup> These practices are embedded in the Judeans' communal and daily lives, and therefore contribute significantly to their collective identity.

Ezekiel's descriptions of Judah's impure activity are particularly focused on Jerusalem, often in areas of prestige like the Temple and the royal court (e.g. Ezek 8; 17). His criticism of social practices within the capital (e.g. Ezek 22:7, 12, 25-29) reveals that his accusations of Judah are really targeted at the Jerusalem elite in the years following 597 BCE (Section 3.3).

Finally, the differences Ezekiel establishes between the Judean communities in Judah and Babylonia are reflected in his expectations for the future of each group (Section 3.4). Whilst the Judeans in forced migration are by no means innocent, their future involves a

---

<sup>485</sup> This is not to say that the exiles' practices do not also diverge from Ezekiel's vision of the ideal community, but this will be discussed in Chapter 4.

wilderness cleansing period hearkening back to the time of Moses. This will be followed by complete bodily restoration (“a new heart and a new spirit” and “hearts of flesh;” 11:19; 18:31; 36:26) and a renewed covenant with Yahweh as his exclusive people (20:37). By contrast, those left in Judah can only await death and destruction. There is some suggestion that over time, Ezekiel came to accept the Judeans who were forcibly migrated to Babylonia in 587 and 582 BCE, or at least that the school which edited and preserved his book did (e.g. Ezek 4:13; 5:1-5; 6:8-9, 12; 9:4; 14:22-23; 16:59-63). However, the Judeans who remained in Judah after that were never accepted in Ezekiel’s ideology.

It is common for forced migrant communities to develop a distinct identity from the community they left behind (should one survive). The forced migrants’ new environment, as well as the traumatic experience of the migration itself, often influences how the collective identity of the group diverges from that of the group which remains.<sup>486</sup> Yet for such a marked divide to appear between the two Judean communities potentially as soon as four years into the exile (Ezekiel’s first prophecy is said to take place in 593 BCE) requires further explanation.<sup>487</sup>

The geographical divide between Judah and Babylonia was great, though not insurmountable (as evidenced by the messages sent between them, e.g. Jer 29 and

---

<sup>486</sup> Ruth M. Krulfeld and Linda A. Camino, “Introduction,” x.

<sup>487</sup> One possible interpretation is that polemic from a later period (such as that of Ezra and Nehemiah) was injected into the book of Ezekiel by the school that compiled or edited it. This is unlikely, since many of the parts of Ezekiel that are generally considered to be later additions take a more conciliatory tone towards the later forced migrant groups. Additionally, Ezekiel’s focus on Jerusalem and the specific, named individuals involved in its mismanagement (e.g. Jaazaniah in Ezek 8:11) would not have been relevant after the destruction of the city and passing of that generation. Ezekiel’s strong sense of identity as a member of the Jehoiachin exile as opposed to any group remaining in Judah after the 597 BCE deportation can only have arisen in the period between 597 and 587 BCE.

presumably Ezek 11:14-21 and 33:23-39). The physical division of the two communities occurred due to external force and not by choice, so it is insufficient reason for such quick ideological divisions. It is likely that animosity already existed among the pre-597 BCE Jerusalem elite: an animosity that was exacerbated by the forced removal of one of its sectors.<sup>488</sup> For Jehoiachin's cohort to be so reduced in circumstance, so far removed from their source of prestige, must have been an assault to their sense of identity as the urban elite.<sup>489</sup> For them to hear about the new leadership that had arisen in Jerusalem under a Babylonian-appointed king would have been further cause for anxiety. Finally, to receive word that those who remained in Judah considered themselves the sole inheritors of the covenant with Yahweh, gloating about taking over the forced migrants' land, would have been more than they could bear.

Ezekiel's ideology addresses the frustrations that he and his community undoubtedly felt towards their situation and the response of the Judeans in Judah. It is unlikely that Ezekiel's version of events would have been the one to persevere, had not his predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem come to pass. This event appeared to punish the post-597 BCE inhabitants of Jerusalem for their wrongdoing, confirming Ezekiel's legitimacy as a prophet of Yahweh. It was probably this, more than anything else, which ensured the preservation of the book of Ezekiel as well as the exclusivity of the Judean community in Babylonia which it advocated.<sup>490</sup> That an exclusive identity won out is evident in the later

---

<sup>488</sup> The book of Jeremiah reveals great tension between the prophet and various leaders in Jerusalem, but also between the leadership groups themselves, both before and after 597 BCE (e.g. Jer 26:8-24; 28:10-17; 38:4).

<sup>489</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 73.

<sup>490</sup> Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 30.



accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah, which describe clashes between diaspora leaders and those who had remained in Judah.

### **3.1 Ethnic Origins**

One of Ezekiel's main goals is to counter the claim that those remaining in Judah are the sole inheritors of the Yahwistic covenant. Not only would this justify their acquisition of the land the forced migrants had to abandon, it might also discourage the Judeans in Babylonia from continuing to worship Yahweh: a situation Ezekiel considers untenable. Therefore, Ezekiel seeks to prove that it is the community in Babylonia who will continue in covenant with Yahweh. In order to distinguish this "chosen" group from those they recently left behind, Ezekiel undermines what had previously united the two groups. He presents them as having distinct historical and even genetic origins, with a value-judgement ascribed to each. In response to the Judean community's claim that they are the descendants of Abraham (Ezek 33:24), Ezekiel presents them as a continuation of the Canaanites who originally inhabited the land (16:3-6, 45-47). This genealogy is evidenced in the way they behave (Ezek 33:25-26). For Ezekiel, it stands in contrast to the Judeans in Babylonia, whom he construes as the continuation of the Exodus group that entered into the covenant with Yahweh outside of the land (Ezek 20:5).<sup>491</sup>

Ezekiel's reinterpretation of their previously shared history is extreme. Ellen Davis writes: "No one ever recounted Israel's past as Ezekiel does; he presents the most radical revisioning of the tradition, going back to the beginning of the nation's history, and

---

<sup>491</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 140-141.

allowing it to be a consistent record of rebellion and apostasy.”<sup>492</sup> Ezekiel’s foray into “the beginning of the nation’s history” depicts the two groups as having distinct ethnicities. Ethnic identity is much more complex than shared genetics, but an ethnic group’s belief in its common ancestry and history are usually among the most important contributing factors to its sense of identity. The genealogical alienation of the “other” can be observed in Ezekiel’s language: he uses the familial terms such as “brother” and “relatives” (11:14) of his fellow exiles, whilst those who remained are defined by their distant location as “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (11:15) or those who are “upon the soil of Israel” (12:21; 18:2).<sup>493</sup>

Focusing on what makes one group of bodies different from another by virtue of their genealogical descent presents the greatest challenge to a sense of shared ethnicity. This challenge is exacerbated when value judgements are ascribed to it: one community is the “true” Israel, and one has been cut off and damned.<sup>494</sup> By undermining the ethnic ties which previously bound the two groups of Judeans, Ezekiel rewrites not only their history, but also their future. If each group believes the other to be ethnically “other” and inferior, contact and intermarriage between the two becomes increasingly unlikely. In this way, the genealogical differences between the two, initially imagined, become a reality.

---

<sup>492</sup> Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel’s Prophecy*, JSOT Suppl. 78 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 105.

<sup>493</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 141; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 287.

<sup>494</sup> Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality*, 138-39.

### 3.1.1 Ezekiel 11:14-21 and 33:23-29

In the disputation speeches of Ezekiel 11:14-21 and 33:23-29, the Judeans who remained in Judah after the forced migration of 597 BCE are said to have had two sayings concerning the group taken to Babylonia.

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: בְּנֵי־אָדָם אֲחִידָה אֲחִידָה אֲנֹשִׁי וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּלָה אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לָהֶם יִשְׁבִּי יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּחֶקְוִי מֵעַל יְהוָה לָנוּ הִיא נְתֻנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה: ס

Yahweh's word came to me, saying, <sup>15</sup>“Son of man, your brothers, your brothers, your relatives<sup>495</sup> and the whole house of Israel, all of it, are those whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said of them: ‘Go far from Yahweh; the land is given to us as a possession.’” (Ezek 11:14-15)

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: בְּנֵי־אָדָם יִשְׁבִּי הַחֲרָבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עַל־אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹמְרִים לֵאמֹר אֶחָד הָיָה אֲבִרָהֶם וַיִּירֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאַנְחֵנוּ רַבִּים לָנוּ נְתֻנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה: ס

Yahweh's word came to me, saying, <sup>24</sup>“Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places on the land of Israel are speaking, saying, ‘Abraham was one, and he inherited the land. Now we are many; the land is given to us as a possession.’ (Ezek 33:23-24)

The first of these sayings is directed at the forced migrants: “Go far from Yahweh; the land is given to us as a possession” (11:15). The second seems to have been said within post-597 BCE Judah: “Abraham was one, and he inherited the land. Now we are many; the land is given to us as a possession.” (33:24). The reason for excluding the Judeans

---

<sup>495</sup> Literally “the men of your redemption,” referring to relatives who would be expected to buy back property if a man were forced to sell it out of poverty, based on the Holiness Code law in Lev 25:25 (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 189) and practice described in Jer 32:8-14. Interestingly, Jeremiah's undertaking of this practice is a sign act to show that those who go into exile are the ones who will ultimately inherit the land of Judah (Jer 32:37). The writer of Jeremiah may be playing on the similarity between the words *g'l*, to redeem, and *glh*, to go into exile.

taken to Babylonia differs between the two quotations, but the conclusion is the same: “the land is given to *us* as a possession,” not to those who are no longer in it.<sup>496</sup>

Both Judean communities used pre-existing Pentateuchal traditions to develop their own sense of group identity. As Dalit Rom-Shiloni points out, a reassessment of this identity was necessary even without the desire to claim the land as their own. Neither the Holiness Code nor the Deuteronomic structure of history accounts for a partial exile such as the one that occurred in 597 BCE. Rebellion against the terms of Yahweh’s covenant was supposed to lead to destruction and death, followed by the dispersion of survivors into captivity (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 4:25-28; 28:36, 64).<sup>497</sup> The continued Judean presence in the covenant land after 597 BCE contradicted this “proper” course of events and required each community to reassess its identity.<sup>498</sup>

The Judeans who remained seem to have been well aware of the Deuteronomic traditions based on their use of Deuteronomic inheritance language (*yrš/ mōrāšā*) to support their case. In 11:15, the remnant tells the Judeans in Babylonia to “go far” from Yahweh, suggesting that they should abandon worship of him due to their now distant location from his Temple. This complies with the Deuteronomic concept of exile as an act of Yahweh, which resulted in residence in foreign lands and worship of foreign gods (Deut 4:25-28; 28:36, 64).<sup>499</sup>

---

<sup>496</sup> The book of Jeremiah, arising in the context of the remnant, also claimed that the Jehoiachin exiles were the group chosen for restoration (24:1-10; 29:16-18), but the prophet Jeremiah seems to have experienced a great deal of opposition from the leaders in Jerusalem because of prophecies like these (Jer 32:1-5).

<sup>497</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 2-3; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 289-90; John Van Seters, *Prologue to History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 229-30.

<sup>498</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 2.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

However, Ezekiel turns this apparently damning accusation on its head:

לִכְן אָמַר כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה כִּי הִרְסִיתִים בְּגוֹיִם וְכִי הִפְצִיתִם בְּאֶרְצוֹת נֹאֲהִי לָהֶם לְמִקְדָּשׁ מַעֲט בְּאֶרְצוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם: ס  
לִכְן אָמַר כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים וְאֶסְפָּתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָאֶרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִפְצִיתֶם בָּהֶם וְנִתַּמְתִּי  
לָכֶם אֶת־אֲדֹמֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּבָאוּ־שָׁמָּה וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־כָּל־שִׁקּוּצֶיהָ וְאֶת־כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיהָ מִמֶּנָּה:

“Therefore say, ‘Lord Yahweh says this: “Even though I made them go far away among the nations and scattered them among the lands, I have still been a sanctuary to them for a little while in the lands they have come to.””

<sup>17</sup>Therefore say, ‘Lord Yahweh says this: “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you from the lands where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”” <sup>18</sup>And when they come there, they will remove all its disgusting things and abominations from it.” (Ezek 11:16-18)

In accordance with Deuteronomic tradition, Ezekiel agrees that it was indeed Yahweh who caused the forced migration of 597 BCE. Yet Yahweh did not abandon the Judeans in Babylonia to find new gods; he provided a temporary “sanctuary” (*miqdāš*; 11:16) reminiscent of the wilderness period.<sup>500</sup> Even though Yahweh allowed the forced migration to take place as a punishment, it was also so that the migrants could regroup, be renewed, and then return to their homeland to rid it of its “disgusting things and abominations” (11:18) which the Judeans who remained there had created.

---

<sup>500</sup> The identification of this *miqdāš* has been much debated. Early Jewish interpreters believed that it represented the origin of synagogues due to the fact that the Targum translates this verse: “I gave them synagogues, which were distinct from my sanctuary, and they were few in the lands where they were carried” (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 190). In the sense of Judeans gathering together outside of Jerusalem to seek direction from Yahweh (Ezek 8:1; 14:1; 20:1), this may have been the case. Yet in terms of what Ezekiel envisaged, Zimmerli is correct in showing that he would have recognized Yahweh’s abode as the Temple in Jerusalem. Although in Ezek 11:22-23 Yahweh leaves this Temple in disgust, settling on a mountain to the east of the city, he does not go all the way to Babylonia (an “unclean land,” Ezek 4:13). Therefore, the *miqdāš* experienced by the exiles cannot be the physical presence of Yahweh (see Section 3.2.2), but rather represents Yahweh’s spiritual presence with them, providing safety (in that they avoid the destruction of Jerusalem and accompanying threat of death), community, and his word given through his prophet Ezekiel (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 262).

Thus, Ezekiel shows that whilst the forced migration of 597 BCE may at first glance look like the exile threatened as punishment in Deuteronomy, it is a saving act of Yahweh.<sup>501</sup> The threat of exile in its Deuteronomic proportions still awaits those currently in the polluted land: the punishment they can expect for creating this state of affairs.

In the disputation of Chapter 33, those who remain in Judah apparently do not consider the group in Babylonia, but rather reflect on their good fortune in being the sole inheritors of the land of the covenant. According to Ezekiel, they use the tradition of descent from Abraham to legitimate their tenure of the land. Their words echo Genesis 15:

לְנוּ נִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה:

The land has been given to us as a possession (*lēmôrāšā*) (Ezek 33:24b)

לָתֶת לָךְ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ

To give you this land to possess it (*l'riš'ettāh*) (Gen 15:7b)

Some scholars, such as Thomas Römer, believe that the Abrahamic traditions originated with the community who remained in Judah after 597 BCE. There is no clear evidence that the traditions existed before this date.<sup>502</sup> It is easy to understand why the Abraham narrative would have been attractive to the Judeans who remained in Judah: God

<sup>501</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 151. For Jerusalem as contaminated (*tm* ), see Ezek 5:11; 22:3-5, 10-11, 26.

<sup>502</sup> Thomas Römer, *Israel's Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, OBO 99 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 513-17. Although Deutero-Isaiah mentions Abraham as the ancestor of the Israelites, he only does so twice and in conjunction with Isaac and Jacob (Isa 41:8) and Sarah (51:2). Jeremiah only mentions Abraham once and also in conjunction with Isaac and Jacob (Jer 33:26).

promises the patriarch possession of the land while Abraham is residing in it.<sup>503</sup> If the Abraham story is read alone, there is no need for the Israelites to ever leave the land they are given.

It seems that this tradition had some traction even with Ezekiel, who had reason to prefer it did not. That he does not ignore or even contradict his opponents' claim of descent from Abraham suggests that it was an accepted fact among Ezekiel's community as well as the Judeans in Judah. Instead, Ezekiel undermines the claim in several ways. Kenton Sparks suggests that Ezekiel employs the Deuteronomic interpretation of inheritance, which the community in Judah evoked by their language (Ezek 33:24), to show why they are not fit to inherit the land.<sup>504</sup> Ezekiel points out various ways in which the Judeans who remained in the land after 597 BCE have violated the Deuteronomic covenant both socially and ritually:

לֵכֶן אָמַר אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה עַל־הַדָּם | תֹּאכְלוּ וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּשְׂאוּ אֶל־גִּלְלֵיכֶם וְדָם תִּשְׁפֹּכוּ וְהָאָרֶץ  
תִּירָשׁוּ: עֲמַדְתֶּם עַל־חֲרָבְכֶם עָשִׂיתֶן תּוֹעֵבָה וְאִישׁ אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ רָצָהוּ טְמֵאתֶם וְהָאָרֶץ תִּירָשׁוּ: ס

Therefore, say to them, “Lord Yahweh says this: ‘You eat over the blood, you lift your eyes to your idols, you spill blood, and *you* will inherit the land? <sup>26</sup>You rely on your sword, you commit an abomination, a man defiles his friend’s wife, and *you* will inherit the land?’” (Ezek 33:25-26)

However, Rom-Shiloni has noted that the phrase *ntn lēmôrāšā* (used in both 11:15 and 33:24) resembles Exodus 6:8 more closely than Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy tends to

---

<sup>503</sup> Van Seters suggests that the remnant understood the Abraham tradition as entailing unconditional inheritance of the land and were unaware of the exodus-settlement tradition, showing that these two traditions were still distinct during the exilic period (Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 239-40). However, Sparks points out that the language of inheritance is so closely linked to Deuteronomy and its stipulations for tenure of the land that it is unlikely the remnant would have been unaware of these traditions (Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 290). The writer of Ezekiel, at least, knew of both.

<sup>504</sup> Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 290.

use the verb *yrš* more often than the noun *môrāšā*.<sup>505</sup> Through his choice of words, Ezekiel cleverly references an Exodus tradition in the midst of a claim about Abraham. Exodus 6:2-8 is a Priestly passage concerning the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham; something which will occur while Jacob's descendants are in Egypt. Ezekiel's use of this tradition reminds his audience that although promises were made to Abraham, they only came to fruition outside of the land of Israel under Moses' leadership. Ezekiel leaves the Judeans remaining in Judah with their tradition of descent from Abraham, but shows why this tradition is insufficient to lay claim to the land.

Additionally, Rom-Shiloni has shown that the specific crimes Ezekiel attributes to those remaining in Judah (idolatry, bloodshed, and sexual misconduct) in 33:25-26 are the same as those identified in Leviticus 18-20. According to this Holiness Code passage, these are the crimes of the Canaanites which caused Yahweh to drive them out from the land in favour of the Israelites (Lev 20:23).<sup>506</sup> Thus, Ezekiel shows that the promises made to Abraham will not be fulfilled for those in Judah, who behave more like Canaanites than Israelites. He emphasizes this view even more forcefully in the metaphor of Chapter 16.

### **3.1.2 Ezekiel 16:3-6, 45-47**

The comparison of the Judean remnant to Canaanites, hinted at in Ezekiel 33:25-26, is made explicit in Ezekiel 16. This chapter, like Ezekiel 23, is a narrative about Jerusalem's history where the city is portrayed as a woman. Unlike Ezekiel 23, the story

---

<sup>505</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 146.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 154.



is about Jerusalem alone; though she has two sisters instead of one, they are only mentioned briefly in 16:46. In verses 3-6 and 45-47 Jerusalem's own origins are discussed in detail:

וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לִירוּשָׁלַם מְלֻחָתָהּ וּמְלֻחָתָהּ מֵאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי אָבִיהָ הָאֱמֹרִי וְאִמָּהּ הַחִתִּית: וּמִלְדוּתָהּ בְּיוֹם הַוִּלְדוּתָהּ אֶתָּה לֹא־כָרַת שָׂרָךְ וּבָמִים לֹא־רָחַצְתָּ לְמַשְׁעֵי וְהַמָּלַח לֹא הִמְלַחְתָּ וְהַחֲמֵל לֹא חָתַמְתָּ: לֹא־חָסָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ אֶחָת מֵאֵלֶּה לְחַמְלָה עָלֶיךָ וְתִשְׁלַכִּי אֶל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּגֻעַל נַפְשֶׁךָ בְּיוֹם הַלְדוּתָהּ אֶתָּה: וְאָעֲבַר עָלֶיךָ וְאָרְאֶה מִתְבֹּסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶּיךָ וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי:

Say, “This is what Lord Yahweh says to Jerusalem: ‘Your origins<sup>507</sup> and your birth are from the land of the Canaanites; your father is Amorite and your mother Hittite. <sup>4</sup>As for your birth, on the day you were born your umbilical cord was not cut, you were not washed clean<sup>508</sup> with water, you were not salted with salt, nor were you wrapped with wrappings. <sup>5</sup>No eye pitied you to do one of these things out of compassion for you, and you were cast into the open country out of loathing for you on the day you were born. <sup>6</sup>I passed by you and saw you thrashing in your blood, so I said to you in your blood, “Live!” And I said to you in your blood, “Live!”’” (Ezek 16:3-6)

בַּת־אֱמֹהָ אַתָּה גִּעַלְתָּ אִשָּׁה וּבְנֵיהָ וְאָחֻת אַחֻתָּה אֶתָּה אִשָּׁר גִּעַלָהּ אֲנִשְׁיָהּ וּבְנֵיהָ אִמָּכָה חִתִּית וְאָבִיכָה אֱמֹרִי: וְאָחֻתָּה הַגְּדוּלָה שְׁמֶרֶן הִיא וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת עַל־שְׂמֹאלָךְ וְאָחֻתָּה הַקְּטָנָה מִמֶּךָ הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת מִיְמִינָךְ סֹדֶם וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ: וְלֹא בְדַרְכֵיהֶן הִלַכְתָּ וּבְתוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶן עָשִׂיתִי [עֲשִׂיתִי] כַּמַּעֲט קֹט וּתְשַׁחֲתִי מֵהֶן בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיהֶן:

You are the daughter of your mother, who loathes her husband and her children, and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was Hittite and your father Amorite. <sup>46</sup>Your older sister is Samaria, and her daughters live to your left; and your younger sister who lives to your right is Sodom with her daughters. <sup>47</sup>But you did not walk in their ways or act according to their abominations; in very little (time) you were more corrupt than them in all your ways. (Ezek 16:45-47)

<sup>507</sup> The term *mēkûrâ* only occurs in Ezekiel (also 21:35 [Heb.] and 29:14). Its derivation is uncertain, but its meaning is clear enough: here it parallels “your birth” (*mōldōtayik*) and in 21:35 it parallels “where you were created” (*nibrē’t*).

<sup>508</sup> The root *š’h* is a *hapax* with uncertain meaning. Targum has “to cleanse him” whereas the Greek and Syriac translations do not include any word. Driver suggested an Aramaized verbal noun from *š’y*, cognate to the Hebrew root *š’*, to smooth, be smeared (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 473).

Not only does 16:3 explicitly state Ezekiel's view that the Judeans in Judah have Canaanite origins; it also portrays them as the result of a mixed marriage between an Amorite and a Hittite.<sup>509</sup> Both of these people groups were considered pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land in biblical tradition (e.g. Exod 3:8; Deut 7:1). It is strange that Ezekiel chooses them for Jerusalem's heritage, since elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible Jerusalem is known to have been a Jebusite city before David conquered it (2 Sam 5:6; 24:18-25).<sup>510</sup>

Although the Jebusites were among the peoples that Israel was supposed to eliminate from the land (e.g. Exod 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deut 20:17; Josh 3:10), Ezekiel may have refrained from mentioning them due to the fact that unlike the Amorites and the Hittites, they had one redeeming feature in Judean tradition. 2 Samuel 24:22 records that Araunah the Jebusite offered to give his Jerusalem threshing floor to David to use as land for the Temple, as well as his oxen and threshing sledges for sacrifices to Yahweh. Although David insisted on paying for everything, Araunah's willingness to worship Yahweh (albeit due to fear of a plague) was duly noted.<sup>511</sup>

---

<sup>509</sup> Neither of these people groups are archaeologically attested in the land at the same time as the Israelites, but both appear in biblical tradition as recognized precursors to Israelite habitation in Canaan. The settlement traditions use the term "Amorite" as a general term for people who were living in the land before the Israelites (e.g. Josh 10:6). Similarly, the Hittites are (incorrectly) listed as one of the Canaanite peoples whom the Israelites expelled (e.g. in Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11). Therefore, the writer of Ezekiel's purpose is to show that Jerusalem's origins are with the people groups that Yahweh commanded the Israelites to expel from the land on account of their disgusting practices (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 337-38).

<sup>510</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 475, 508. However, Josh 10:6 refers to the king of Jerusalem at the time of the Israelite settlement as Adonizedek, the leader of "the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountain country." Meanwhile, David is said to have at least one Hittite, Uriah, in his army (2 Sam 11:3ff.), suggesting that there may have been traditions that saw Amorite and Hittite influence in Jerusalem alongside or instead of a Jebusite presence (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 337-38).

<sup>511</sup> Block (*The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 477 n.81) suggests that the unusual use of *bûs* in the Hithpael (occurring only in 16:6, 22) may be influenced by assonantal association w *yēbûsî*, (Jebusite).

Despite the Pentateuchal sources recording Yahweh's repeated commandments to eliminate all non-Israelites from the land, it is evident that this did not take place. There is no archaeological evidence for a wide-scale Israelite conquest of the Cisjordan.<sup>512</sup> Some biblical accounts even attest to the land being occupied by foreigners as well as Israelites after the settlement (e.g. Judges 1:21; 3:5; 1 Kgs 9:20). Additionally, the ban on intermarriage between Israelites and Canaanites in Deuteronomy 7:2-3 suggests they were probably occurring. This is not surprising given that archaeological evidence points to the Israelites' origins being in Canaan.<sup>513</sup>

Ezekiel may be the only biblical author to acknowledge this state of affairs. As Daniel Block points out, it was probably "politically incorrect" to mention Israel's Canaanite heritage; for Ezekiel to do so would definitely have provoked a reaction from his audience.<sup>514</sup> Not only does he claim that Jerusalem is genealogically Canaanite, but also that she, as the woman in Ezekiel 16, is the offspring of two different ethnic groups, the product of a non-normative union, which may explain why she was accepted by neither her parents nor her community.

The foreign nature of Jerusalem's parents in Ezekiel 16 is further emphasized by the inhumane way they treat their newborn child. The customs that Ezekiel's community would have accepted as normal practice after a birth are listed in verse 4: cutting the

---

Even if this is what Ezekiel intended, it does not amount to the explicit Amorite and Hittite parentage of Jerusalem.

<sup>512</sup> Baruch Halpern, "Settlement of Canaan," *ABD* 5, 1120-43 (1132-1135); Lawrence E. Stager, "Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 123-75 (128-134).

<sup>513</sup> Stager, "Forging an Identity," 136-37.

<sup>514</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 475.

umbilical cord,<sup>515</sup> washing the baby, rubbing it or its clothes with salt, and wrapping it in swaddling cloths.<sup>516</sup> The first two customs are self-explanatory, but the third is less clear. Whether hygienic or apotropaic, or both, the purpose of the salt and whether it was rubbed onto the skin or the clothes is uncertain, but the practice bears resemblance to some birth customs known from twentieth-century anthropological studies. For example, E.W.G. Masterman observed in 1918 that among Middle Eastern Jewish communities the midwife would attend to certain duties upon the birth of a child and for forty days afterwards: “As soon as the navel is cut the midwife rubs the child all over with salt, water, and oil, and tightly swathes it in clothes for seven days; at the end of that time she removes the dirty clothes, washes the child and anoints it, and then wraps it up again for seven days – and so on till the fortieth day.”<sup>517</sup>

---

<sup>515</sup> S. Tamar Kamionkowski (*Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos: A Study on the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOT Suppl. 368 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 98-99) points out that the umbilical cord must logically have been cut, otherwise the baby would continue to receive nourishment from the mother. She suggests that the intended meaning in Ezek 16:4 is that the cord was not cut closely or properly: in many cultures the cord is preserved due to its perceived apotropaic powers. The act of cutting the cord can formalize the child’s membership of the family and of the society, so to neglect this practice would be a symbol of the baby’s ostracism and possibly even exposure to evil spirits.

<sup>516</sup> It is important to acknowledge Peggy Day’s work on the nature of metaphor in Ezekiel 16. She focuses on the punishment of Jerusalem in 16:35-37, but her point is relevant to the whole chapter. The nature of metaphor dictates that the tenor (principal topic) is described using a vehicle (figurative language) which is not the same as what is really being discussed. Therefore, the details need not map onto real, historical practices. Day’s example is that in the metaphor of Ezekiel 16, where Jerusalem is an adulterous woman, her punishment does not reflect the real punishment of adulterous women in the ancient Near East, but rather the punishment for breaking the covenant with Yahweh (Peggy L. Day, “Adulterous Jerusalem’s Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI,” *VT* 50/3 [2000], 285-309). In Ezek 16:3-6, the tenor is Jerusalem’s humble beginnings among the nations and the vehicle is a baby abandoned at birth. The descriptions of birth rituals need not map onto real, historical practices in order to convey the point. For example, in the discussion of adoption practices below, it is unlikely that the adoptive parent would merely pass by the child and utter a declarative phrase so that the child would legally be theirs, as Yahweh does in 16:6. However, an understanding of ancient Israelite birth and adoption rituals sheds light on what Ezekiel is conveying about Jerusalem’s relationship to Yahweh when he evokes these practices.

<sup>517</sup> E.W.G. Masterman, *Hygiene and Disease in Palestine in Modern and Biblical Times* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1918), 30. Masterman does not provide a reason for this custom, but he attributes many other birth customs to superstitions concerning fear of the demon Lilith and a wish for the safety and good luck of the new baby. It should be noted that his background was medical and not anthropological.

Wrapping the baby in swaddling cloths (*hoḥtēl*;" the Hophal infinitive absolute of the verb "to wrap;" *ḥtl*) again seems fairly straightforward, although it could have had the added intention of causing the baby to develop straight limbs, and in some communities they were wrapped this way for 40 days, 6 months, or even longer.<sup>518</sup> In these ways, the baby would be welcomed into its family and immediately inducted into the customs of the society to which it would belong.<sup>519</sup>

In the story of Ezekiel 16, the baby girl partakes in no such customs. Her father is not mentioned aside from his Amorite ethnicity, but her mother was necessarily present at the birth. Instead of doing what would be expected of an Israelite mother and ensuring that her baby is taken care of, she acts in a foreign and inhumane manner. Ezekiel removes from Jerusalem's mother one of the common qualities that exists between all people groups: care for one's own offspring. The claim that other ethnic groups act brutally towards their children usually occurs in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the foreign practice of child sacrifice (e.g. Lev 18:21, 24-25; 1 Kings 11:7-8).<sup>520</sup>

---

Morgenstern (*Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among Semites* [Chicago: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966], 7-9) confirms that the practice of rubbing salt (often mixed with oil) on newborns was widespread in twentieth-century CE Syria and Palestine. Similarly, Kamionkowski suggests the practice of salting the baby may have had an apotropaic function due to its perceived purifying qualities as evidenced in Ezek 47:11 and 2 Kgs 2:20-22 (*Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos*, 99).

<sup>518</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 475; Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among Semites*, 9.

<sup>519</sup> Morgenstern (*Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among Semites*, 8) notes that in some parts of Syria, to say that someone was not salted at birth is a great insult, suggesting that they are a bastard. Although this custom comes from the modern era, it demonstrates the importance of birth rituals for symbolizing one's acceptance into society.

<sup>520</sup> Although other strands of biblical tradition suggest (without condoning it) that the practice was native to Israel as well (Dewrell, "Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel and Its Opponents" [PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2012], 132-150).

By accusing Jerusalem's "Hittite" mother of this heartless act, Ezekiel sets the scene for his shocking revelation in verse 45. Despite Yahweh taking the baby in and raising her as his own, nature won over nurture when she reached adulthood. She is told, "You are the daughter of your mother, who loathes her husband and her children:" the inhabitants of Jerusalem reveal their taboo Canaanite roots. They are no better than their child-abandoning, child-sacrificing neighbours, and indeed Ezekiel includes the latter practice among Jerusalem's sins elsewhere in Chapter 16 (16:20-21, 36; cf. 20:26, 31 and 23:39).<sup>521</sup> To drive the point home even further, Ezekiel shows that Sodom and Samaria, Jerusalem's sisters, are products of the same despicable mother, and yet even without Yahweh's adoption and influence they still maintain a higher standard of purity than Jerusalem (16:46). All of these claims are heaped up to cause the maximum amount of offense to the residents of Jerusalem. Ezekiel shifts the sense of alienation that the pre-exilic biblical writers carefully constructed for the Canaanites onto the post-597 BCE community in Jerusalem.

However, there is some evidence to suggest that the mother in the narrative of Ezekiel 16 was acting in a manner not entirely unprecedented for mothers within Israelite tradition. Though the birth rituals described in 16:4 were presumably the norm, it is possible that Jerusalem's mother acted in accordance with the practice of giving up a baby for adoption. Mordecai Cogan showed that the Hiphil of the verb *šlk*, used in 16:5,

---

<sup>521</sup> Child sacrifice, as well as sexual offences (of which there are plenty in Ezekiel 16) are the main crimes the Canaanites are accused of in the Holiness Code and are the ones which merit their expulsion from Israel (Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 165). The archaeological theorist Sam Lucy points out that scholars should not equate the practices of infanticide (including child sacrifice) and exposure, as they can have different social contexts (Sam Lucy, "The Archaeology of Age," in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al. [London: Routledge, 2005], 43-66 [44-45]). The nature of this child's near-death by exposure specifically is discussed below, pp. 161-63.

functions as a technical term for the legal abandonment of an item and the rights and responsibilities that accompany it.<sup>522</sup>

Meir Malul expanded on this discovery, showing that there are three categories of action the verb refers to: exposure of children; banishment; and the removal of something from one's legal domain.<sup>523</sup> There are two other examples from the Hebrew Bible where the Hiphil of *šlk* refers to the exposure of children: Pharaoh's command to cast newborn male babies onto the Nile (Exod 1:22); and Hagar's plan to leave Ishmael under some bushes to die (Gen 21:15).<sup>524</sup>

A broader view of the use of the verb *hšlyk* in the Hebrew Bible shows that it typically refers to something removed from the community. An example is meat that is torn by wild animals and left for dogs in the *šādeh* (Exod 22:30), the same term used for the open country as in Ezekiel 16:5. Malul shows that the motif of being left to the dogs is used in some Neo-Babylonian adoption texts, where the adopted child is said to have been cast into the dog's mouth by their birth parent before being picked up from the dog's mouth by their adopted parent.<sup>525</sup> The birth parent's (hopefully) metaphorical

---

<sup>522</sup> Morton Cogan, "A Technical Term for Exposure," *JNES* 27/2 (1968), 133-35.

<sup>523</sup> Meir Malul, "Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16:1-7," *JSOT* 46 (1990), 97-121 (100).

<sup>524</sup> Casting someone into the Nile would most likely lead to death by drowning rather than exposure, but the fact that the Hiphil of *šlk* is used here, combined with the tradition of the infant Moses being exposed on the Nile in his basket prior to his adoption (and the similar tradition concerning Sargon of Akkad) led Cogan to conclude that exposure was the intended meaning ("A Technical Term for Exposure," 134-35; also Malul, "Adoption of Foundlings," 100). To add to this consideration is the fact that one of the primary dangers of the Nile would have been wild animals (i.e. crocodiles and hippos), which Malul shows is a key component of the exposure-of-children motif ("Adoption of Foundlings," 102). Depending on Joseph's age at the time, his abandonment in a well by his older brothers could be included among these examples, since their original plan (with the exception of Reuben) was to leave him for dead (Gen 37:22-24).

<sup>525</sup> Malul, "Adoption of Foundlings," 105.

exposure of their biological child to mortal danger serves as proof that they have yielded responsibility for that child to another and cannot reclaim it at a later date.

Although the location of the baby in the open country (*śādeh*) in Ezekiel 16:5 is suggestive of all the dangers that would accompany it, wild animals are not explicitly mentioned. Another aspect of the narrative in Ezekiel 16 is linked to the practice of giving up a child for adoption, which is the lack of washing of the baby so that she remains in her birth blood (16:4, 6). Malul shows that four Old Babylonian legal texts refer to exposing children whilst still in their amniotic fluid or birth blood in preparation for their adoption by someone else. Similarly, several Roman legal texts referring to the purchase of slaves as newborns, although apparently not requiring their exposure, is said to be done “out of the blood.”<sup>526</sup> In both cases, the mention of the amniotic fluid or blood seems to be the proof that the birth parents had relinquished all rights to the child as soon as he or she was born. References from such diverse locations and periods cannot prove the writer of Ezekiel’s knowledge of traditions exactly like these. Yet his detailed description of the complete abandonment of Jerusalem as a baby in Chapter 16 may reveal that Yahweh’s relationship to her was one of legal adoption, which is never made explicit (to the modern reader, at least).<sup>527</sup> This might explain the purpose of the mother’s actions as more than wanton cruelty.

---

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.,” 106-110.

<sup>527</sup> Malul, “Adoption of Foundlings,” 99. This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Yahweh later becomes the woman’s husband. Kathleen Abraham’s study of Neo-Babylonian marriage contracts showed that orphaned women whose father was unknown had either a limited dowry or no dowry at all, and hence fewer options when it came to marriage. Therefore, Yahweh’s actions in adopting and marrying the foundling Jerusalem ensure her security, and his wedding gifts to her (Ezek 16:10-13) are incomprehensibly generous given her status in society (Abraham, *West Semitic and Judean Brides*, 210).



However, it is not the intention of Ezekiel's author to exonerate the mother, even if she did follow a known legal practice. Giving one's child up for adoption or, much worse, slavery (and the lines between the two were often blurred in the ancient world<sup>528</sup>), would have been a worst-case scenario only to be undertaken if there were no other options. By contrast, Jerusalem's mother exposes her child "out of loathing" (*bēgō 'al*; 16:5; cf. verse 45), and her lack of concern for the infant's wellbeing, for example in engaging a midwife and/or other family members in her care, means she is left entirely without a community: "no eye pitied you" (*lō' hāsā 'alayik 'ayin*; 16:5).

Therefore, Ezekiel 16 reminds the Judeans still living in Jerusalem of their Canaanite origins. Like the woman in the story, they will live their entire lives in Canaan/ Israel.<sup>529</sup> In this way they are unlike the Israelites who entered into a covenant relationship with Yahweh outside of the land after their Exodus from Egypt, a community to which the writer of Ezekiel compares his own.<sup>530</sup> Referring to the community in Jerusalem as "Canaanites" based on their ritual and social practices as well as their origins in intermarriage is a tradition taken up by Ezra and Nehemiah when they settle in post-exilic Judah (Ezra 9:1-2, 10-14; Neh 10:29-31, 13:23-27), suggesting that Ezekiel's ideological efforts, in this area at least, were successful.<sup>531</sup>

---

<sup>528</sup> Abraham has shown that the orphaned girls mentioned in Neo-Babylonian marriage contracts had to serve (*palāhu*) their adoptive parents until the parents died, whereas foundlings whose fathers were unknown were never formally adopted but had to serve (*palāhu*) their foster parents unless they were bought by another household as a half-free person, or married a half-free person (*West Semitic and Judean Brides*, 210-11).

<sup>529</sup> Jer 16:3-4 contains a prophecy directed against "the sons and daughters who were born in this place," that they will die in Israel and not be buried.

<sup>530</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 142.

<sup>531</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 169.

### 3.1.3 Ezekiel 20

Ezekiel 20:1-44 outlines a salvation history which prioritizes the Exodus tradition and presents Ezekiel's community as its inheritors. Like Ezekiel 16, this prophetic address begins by accusing its audience of sinful activity. Yet here it is the forced migrant community who is the target rather than those in Jerusalem. This is evident in Yahweh's promise that "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you have been scattered" (20:34). Ezekiel addresses his separate criticisms to both groups by reminding them of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. Whilst in Ezekiel 16, that covenant takes place in Canaan (and, by implication, with Canaanites; 16:8), in Ezekiel 20 it is enacted "in the land of Egypt" (*bē'ereš mišrayim*; 20:5).<sup>532</sup>

In Chapter 20, the influence of Deuteronomic tradition is again evident.<sup>533</sup> Carly Crouch showed that the mythology of a common origin in the Exodus from Egypt was a key part of the Deuteronomic identity formation that took place in seventh-century BCE Judah.<sup>534</sup> Ezekiel emphasizes this tradition, but uses it for the purpose of distinguishing his community's origins from those of the Judeans in Judah. He claims that Yahweh selected Israel as his people, entered into covenant with them, and revealed his name to

---

<sup>532</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 625; Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 157.

<sup>533</sup> Block suggests an anti-Deuteronomist polemic based on Ezekiel's avoidance of the term *nišba'*, to swear, and preference for *ns' yād*, to lift one's hand (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 626) but this is a small detail compared to the great number of Deuteronomic terms and traditions Ezekiel does make use of (as well as the fact that the term *ns' yād* does occur in Deut 32:40).

<sup>534</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 136ff. Cf. Jer 32:20-44.

them outside of the land of Israel (20:5).<sup>535</sup> There is no mention of the prior covenant with Abraham which the Judeans in Judah evoke (Ezek 33:24).<sup>536</sup>

For Ezekiel, the foundation events for Israel's communal history are as follows: the revelation of the name "Yahweh" and covenant with him (20:5); the Exodus from Egypt and wilderness period (20:10); the provision of Yahweh's statutes, judgements, and the sign of the Sabbath (20:11-12);<sup>537</sup> and the settlement in Canaan (20:28). Ezekiel portrays his exilic community as standing in continuity with these traditions through their genealogy as well as their experience of being outside of the land of Israel.<sup>538</sup>

To emphasize their genealogy, Ezekiel uses a unique title for his exilic community: "the offspring of the house of Jacob" (*zera' bêt ya'ăqōb*; 20:5), not used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>539</sup> The use of the term *zera'* ("seed") asserts direct genetic descent, undermining Ezekiel's opponents' claim to Abrahamic ancestry. Abraham had many descendants, but only Jacob and his sons migrated to Egypt and inherited Yahweh's covenant. The affiliation with Jacob, as well as Ezekiel's continual use of the title "Israel" for the Judeans, reminds his audience of their shared history with the twelve tribes.<sup>540</sup> Even though the northern kingdom suffered defeat and displacement at the hands of the Neo-Assyrian empire in 721 BCE, Ezekiel accepts the traditions concerning

---

<sup>535</sup> Cf. Exod 3:14-15; 6:3.

<sup>536</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 627-28.

<sup>537</sup> See Section 3.2.3 for more detail.

<sup>538</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 160-61.

<sup>539</sup> The closest parallels are *zera' bêt yiśrā'ēl* in Jer 23:8 and Ezek 44:22. Jer 23:8 uses this term of the forced migrant Judeans as well, as it refers to Yahweh bringing the *zera' bêt yiśrā'ēl* out of "the north country and all the countries where he had scattered them" and into their own land.

<sup>540</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 140.

its genealogical connection to his own community. By emphasizing the common origin of all twelve tribes, he subjugates the tradition of particular closeness between members of the tribe of Judah. In Ezekiel's discussion of a future restoration, he suggests that the experience of exile, rather than Judean national identity, is more significant in determining who is destined to be renewed by Yahweh.<sup>541</sup>

Whilst Ezekiel seeks to delegitimize the Judeans remaining in Judah, he does not praise the exilic group by contrast. Following the founding events of Israel's existence, the rest of the salvation history in Ezekiel 20 is a cycle of their betrayal of Yahweh's covenant. Each time, Yahweh chooses not to destroy his people but to deal with their sinful tendencies in a variety of ways, including reminding them of his laws and Sabbaths (20:19-20); not bringing the wilderness generation into the land (20:15); scattering his people among the nations (20:23); and even giving them "statutes that were not good" (20:25-26), possibly one of the most controversial statements in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>542</sup>

Through this account, Ezekiel holds the forced migrant community responsible for their systematic rebellion against Yahweh's covenant in the model of the generations before them. They are the ones "scattered among the nations" (20:23) in punishment for this behaviour. However, the cyclical nature of the history presented in Ezekiel 20 also gives the exilic community reason for hope. The Babylonian exile can easily be identified as the punishment stage of the sin-punishment-forgiveness pattern that Ezekiel imposes

---

<sup>541</sup> See Section 3.4

<sup>542</sup> See Dewrell, "Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel and Its Opponents," 192-202 for a full discussion of this complex issue. Dewrell discusses how the origins of the tradition that the Israelites conducted child sacrifice are probably to be found in the "Law of the Firstborn" in Ex 13:12b-13 without acknowledgement of its redemption clause.

on Israel's history.<sup>543</sup> Ezekiel 20 demonstrates that Yahweh alone is in control of this history. Regardless of how much the people of Israel rebel against him, he repeatedly finds a way to punish them whilst avoiding their complete destruction. Ezekiel foresees Yahweh renewing the covenant with the forced migrants regardless of their own actions (20:34-37), though warns that any who rebel against this process will be removed from the community (20:38). By contrast, those remaining in Judah will face complete destruction (see Section 3.4.1). The Judean forced migrants' membership of this shared history is demonstrated as a given, whether those whom Ezekiel addresses acknowledge it or not.

### 3.1.4 Intermarriage

It is clear that Ezekiel wished to exclude the Judeans in Judah from the group identity he perceived for the forced migrants in Babylonia. That at least some others in his community agreed with him is evident given that his words were preserved through the generations in exile and beyond. Ezra and Nehemiah's exclusive definition of Judean identity around 150 years after Ezekiel's lifetime further suggests that his views had traction among his audience.<sup>544</sup> It is not surprising that Ezekiel's community would agree that they had not been excised from Yahweh's covenant and identify as the continuation of the people of Israel. What is surprising is that they claimed exclusive right to this

---

<sup>543</sup> Pamela Barmash, "Reimagining Exile Through the Lens of the Exodus: Turning Points in Israelite History and Texts," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 93-106 (103).

<sup>544</sup> Christine E. Hayes (*Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 10, 26-33) credits Ezra and Nehemiah with shifting the emphasis on endogamy among the Judeans from a moral-religious one to a genealogical one, but it is clear in the book of Ezekiel that the two concepts of religion and ethnicity are inextricably linked

identity, cutting off the community in Judah who only a few years previously had been their compatriots. One possible reason for this is the forced migrants' perception that those who remained in Judah eagerly claimed the land, property, and leadership positions they had to leave behind. If they really did this, justifying their actions by asserting that they were the sole inheritors of Yahweh's promises (Ezek 11:15 and 33:24), it is understandable that the Judeans in Babylonia took a defensive approach. Their anger and frustration at being unable to intervene quickly turned a defensive approach into an aggressive one. People like Ezekiel realized that if the Judeans in Babylonia felt themselves to be excluded from Yahweh's covenant as well as their homeland, there would be little ideological impetus for them to maintain their identity as Judeans.

There is another factor that may have contributed to Ezekiel's claims that the Judeans in Judah had foreign origins. His portrayal of that group as Canaanites is similar to Ezra's portrayal of those living in Israel as "The Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites" (Ezra 9:1; cf. Neh 13:23).<sup>545</sup> It is possible that the notion of the Judeans in Judah intermarrying with other ethnic groups began as early as Ezekiel's ministry. Whether there was any truth to it is difficult to prove given the paucity of evidence concerning the community in Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the facts of the situation are less relevant than whether the exilic community believed intermarriage to have been taking place.

---

<sup>545</sup> Ezra also accuses men who had returned from Babylonia of marrying foreign women (Ezra 10:7-10). They must separate themselves from the "peoples of the land" (*'ammê hā'āreṣ*) and their "foreign" wives (*hanāšîm hanokrîyôt*; perhaps part of the same group; 10:11) if they wish to continue their membership in the "congregation of the exiles" (*qêhal hagôlâ*; 10:8).

What makes the question of intermarriage particularly interesting is the evidence that it was taking place among the forced migrant Judeans. Judeans appear as witnesses and participants in several marriage contracts from sixth century BCE Babylonia.<sup>546</sup> This may reflect the Judeans' rapid assimilation into Babylonian juridical practices concerning marriage law, perhaps in compliance with Jeremiah's exhortation to the exiles to "take wives and have children, and takes wives for your sons, and give your daughters to men" (*qēḥû nāšîm wēḥôlîdû bānîm ûbānôt ûqēḥû libnêkem nāšîm wē'et bēnôtêkem tēnû la'ānāšîm*; Jer 29:6) in his letter to the elders in Babylonia.<sup>547</sup>

Although Ezekiel does not criticize the practice of intermarriage outright, he may intend to do so through his use of Babylonian marriage terminology. The word used for the monetary gift Jerusalem (as a woman) receives in Ezekiel 16:33 is *nēdānayik*. Several scholars have suggested this is a loanword from the Akkadian *nudunnû*, the term for "dowry" in Old Babylonian and Neo-Babylonian texts.<sup>548</sup> Ezekiel uses this word to show that unlike regular prostitutes, who receive payment for their services, Jerusalem is so desperate to entice men that she is willing to provide the same kind of dowry that would normally accompany the bride in a Babylonian marriage. Furthermore, Vanderhooft notes

---

<sup>546</sup> Roth, *Babylonian Marriage Agreements*, 92-95; Abraham, *West Semitic and Judean Brides*, 206-207. Abraham shows that one Akkadian marriage contract from āl-Yāhūdu dating to the early Achaemenid period and drawn up in the typical Babylonian style of the time contained at least thirteen witnesses with West Semitic names (either Hebrew or Aramaic, ending with the *-yah* theophoric element). Three other cuneiform marriage contracts (BMA 26; BMA 17; and BaAr 2/5) share several of its features, including the marriage of a West-Semitic woman to a Babylonian man; the absence of the bride's father; the lack of a dowry; the presence of West Semitic witnesses; and the invocation of several main Babylonian deities (cf. Abraham, *Negotiating Marriage*, 44-46).

<sup>547</sup> Ames, "The Cascading Effects of Exile," 183-84; Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In And On Babylon," 109.

<sup>548</sup> Vanderhooft, "Ezekiel In And On Babylon," 108-109. Stökl ("A Youth Without Blemish," 241) points out that the strange vocalization of *nēdānayik* in Ezek 16:33 means its characterization as a loanword from *nudunnû* is not certain.

that immediately prior to this accusation, Ezekiel accuses Jerusalem of prostituting herself with “Canaan Chaldea” (*kēna ‘an kaśdīmā*; 16:29). The unification of these diverse geographic locations does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but it may reflect Ezekiel’s concern about intermarriage occurring between Judeans and these foreign groups, whether in Judah or Babylonia.<sup>549</sup>

John Ahn suggests that after the 587 BCE destruction and deportation, Gedaliah may have encouraged other ethnic groups to immigrate into Judah in order to revive the population and economy.<sup>550</sup> He claims that “(highly) qualified non-Judeans from Edom, Ammon, Moab, or other regions” must have filled the void left by the Judean displacements, creating a “rich heterogeneous society in Yehud” by the period of the return migrations.<sup>551</sup> There is limited evidence to support this theory. Gedaliah’s willingness to cooperate with Babylonian rule and to take back the Judeans who had fled to Ammon, Moab, and Edom (Jer 40:9-12)<sup>552</sup> may reflect an openness to outside

---

<sup>549</sup> Vanderhooft, “Ezekiel in and on Babylon,” 109. Ezek 40-48 appears to be somewhat open to the idea of foreigners joining the Israelite community, for example in allowing the *gēr* (“sojourner”) to receive an allotment of land within the tribal areas (Ezek 47:21-23). Nevertheless, a wariness concerning people of different ethnicities is evident in Ezekiel’s law that foreigners (*bēnē nēkār*) may not enter the Jerusalem Temple (Ezek 44:7) and that Zadokite priests may only marry women “of the seed of the House of Israel,” who must be virgins in order to safeguard the genealogical purity of the priestly line (Ezek 44:22; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 22, 27).

<sup>550</sup> John Ahn, “Ezekiel 15: A מִשְׁלַּח,” in *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration*, ed. Mark J. Boda et al. (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 115.

<sup>551</sup> Ahn, “Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile,” 177.

<sup>552</sup> These Judeans could potentially have married residents of Ammon, Moab, and Edom during their time there, thus bringing some non-Judeans into Judah. Yet Jeremiah’s account suggests that their stay in the land may have been a brief one, since Gedaliah’s assassination four years after his appointment as governor caused another displacement of Judeans, some to Egypt (Jer 43:7; cf. 2 Kgs 25:26) and some to Babylonia (Jer 52:30). These events further attest to the existence of bitter rivalries within Judah, amounting to civil warfare between the Ammonite-sponsored faction led by Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the pro-Gedaliah faction led by Johanan the son of Kareah (Jer 40:13-41:18).



influences that made Ezekiel uncomfortable. However, this hardly amounts to an immigration program on Gedaliah's part.

In Ahn's view, it is the group who fled Judah after Gedaliah's assassination who were the target of Ezekiel's vitriol due to their practices of intermarriage between 587 and 582 BCE. Yet Ezekiel's polemic against those remaining in Jerusalem after 597 BCE is so fierce that there can be no doubt that he found fault with them even before Gedaliah's promotion to governor. Whether the concept of their ethnic difference from Ezekiel's group was predominantly a myth fabricated to alienate them as much as possible, or was based on real practices of intermarriage either at the time or later on, it deeply influenced the forced migrant Judeans. This ideology may have been the origin of Ezra and Nehemiah's portrayal of the population in Judah as foreigners, banned from intermarrying with the returning migrants (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh 13:23-28). Ezekiel's fabrication of separate origins for the two groups was perhaps even more effective than envisioned.

### **3.2 Ritual Practices**

According to Ezekiel, the dubious genealogical origins of the Judeans remaining in Judah find their expression in behaviour far out of keeping with what is expected of the people of Israel. His accusations fall into two categories: ritual practices and social practices. Again, Ezekiel uses Deuteronomic and Holiness Code traditions to show how the community remaining in Judah has fallen short of the covenant with Yahweh.

Ezekiel alienates the remnant community from his own by portraying them as ritually impure. As Carly Crouch has shown, the language *tô 'ēbâ* (abomination), common

in both Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, creates feelings of disgust towards other people.<sup>553</sup> She explains:

*Tô 'ēbā* is not used of merely any person, act or object that an author dislikes, but rather of those things that are perceived as profoundly different and which are therefore rejected; it is used of people, practices and objects associated with opposed ethnic identities in particular, as well as concepts and practices that are considered fundamentally incompatible.<sup>554</sup>

These “concepts and practices” often include customs most intimately linked to the body and its functions. Anything which is conceived of as violating the cleanliness of the body is seen as foreign and deeply uninviting.<sup>555</sup> It evokes a powerful emotional response calling for the separation from the thing perceived as disgusting, rather than necessarily a rational reason for that separation.<sup>556</sup>

Ezekiel portrays the community in Judah as being thoroughly contaminated (*tm'*) through their abhorrent ritual practices (Ezek 5:11; 22:26). Daniel Smith-Christopher has noted that the book of Ezekiel exhibits one of the common traits of forced migrant communities in its increased concentration on ritual and purity.<sup>557</sup> This was likely influenced by the sense of being a minority group in a foreign environment, but it manifests in creating a divide with the Judeans in Judah as well, who are more threatening to the forced migrants' sense of identity than even the foreign groups living

---

<sup>553</sup> Crouch, “What Makes a Thing Abominable?” 534.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 517.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 521; Turner, *The Body and Society*, 7. Though not that *tô 'ēbā* is an aesthetic category and does not necessarily indicate ritual contamination, which is indicated by *tāmē'* (Milgrom, “Two Biblical Hebrew Priestly Terms,” 114).

<sup>556</sup> Crouch, “What Makes a Thing Abominable?” 522.

<sup>557</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 145.

nearby. Anyone who shared Ezekiel's view would become reluctant to interact with the remnant for fear of corrupting their own purity, making intermarriage between the groups increasingly unlikely and thereby further perpetuating the myth of separate genealogies.

Carly Crouch has further shown that a key aspect of Israelite identity according to Deuteronomy is the practice of exclusive Yahwism through homogenized rituals.<sup>558</sup> Ezekiel frequently portrays the remnant as standing in opposition to these customs. Meanwhile, the aspects of Leviticus 18-20 that he uses to counter the remnant's claim to inherit the land primarily involve idolatry (Lev 19:4), cultic bloodshed (Lev 20:2-6), and sexual offences (Lev 18:6-23; 20:10-21). According to the Holiness Code, it was such practices that led to the Canaanites being expelled from the land (Lev 18:24-30; 20:22).<sup>559</sup> The first two of these misdemeanours appears in Ezekiel's characterizations of the Jerusalemites' ritual practices (Section 3.2.1 and 3.3.1), whilst the third falls into the category of social offences (Section 3.3.2).

Ezekiel 8:14-16 explicitly accuses the community in Jerusalem of worshipping foreign gods, specifically the non-Israelite deities Tammuz and Shamash. Yet much more frequently, Ezekiel mentions ritual practices that are out of line with his understanding of exclusive Yahwism, such as his frequent condemnation of idols (e.g. 6:4-5; 8:3-5; 14:1-5, 7; 18:6, 12, 15; 20:28-32; 22:3-4) and images (8:10, 12). Even customs which could have been part of Yahweh-worship are presented as suspect if they do not comply with the stipulations of the Deuteronomic writers, such as the use of incense and incense altars (6:4; 8:11). The over-involvement of lay leadership in the affairs of the Temple is also a

---

<sup>558</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 115ff.

<sup>559</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah," 141.

particular concern of Ezekiel's. As a result of these activities occurring in the land of Judah and even the Temple itself (according to Ezekiel 8), Yahweh leaves his Temple of his own accord (11:22-24). This claim is doubly effective: first, it portrays the Jerusalem community as being separated from Yahweh, countering their claim that it is the forced migrants who are far from him (11:15). Second, it removes Yahweh from the Temple prior to its destruction by the Babylonians, so that he cannot be said to have experienced defeat at their hands.

Ezekiel's strict aniconic policy is particularly interesting given the book's descriptions of Yahweh, unparalleled in their detail by any other part of the Hebrew Bible. The author is very careful to present his vision of Yahweh as wrapped in every conceivable form of light, but underneath it all is a human-like figure. This "body" of Yahweh has implications for the location of the God of Israel, a central concern for Ezekiel, who must prove that Yahweh is more present with the forced migrant community than he is in Jerusalem (Section 3.2.2).

Any future integration between the two groups is rendered yet more difficult by Ezekiel's promotion of a specific calendar within the exilic community (Section 3.2.3). It is difficult to know which elements of this structure were in place prior to the 597 BCE exile, but certainly Ezekiel's method of dating years according to the first forced migration (rather than the reign of Zedekiah, whom he never accepts as legitimate) must be unique to the forced migrant community (1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; 40:1).

Meanwhile, the institution of the Sabbath is mentioned in the context of the salvation history of the exilic group only (20:12-13, 16, 20-24) and the vision of the future Temple

(44:24; 45:17; 46: 1-7), whilst the remnant is accused of defiling the Sabbath (Ezek 22:8, 26). There is some evidence that regular festivals such as the celebration of the New Moon and Passover were practiced in pre-exilic Judah (1 Sam 20:24; 2 Kgs 4:23; 23:21-23; Ps 81:3; Isa 1:13; Amos 8:5), but Ezekiel provides new stipulations as to how and when they are to be observed (45:18-25). If Sabbath observation received increased significance among the forced migrant community, it would have distinguished them not only from the nations that surrounded it, but also from the Judean remnant in a significant way.<sup>560</sup>

The above practices served to create and strengthen the Jehoiachin exiles' sense of identity as distinct from that of the Judeans remaining in Judah. They reflect developments in the religious thinking of the exiles, which had an impact on social structures as well. As Bourdieu has shown, ritual produces bodies that have absorbed the socio-cultural structure of their community to the extent that they have a "practical mastery" of it.<sup>561</sup> The ritualized body both instinctively expresses the identity that has been created through the ritual and creates it again and again through its actions. For example, the act of kneeling communicates an identity of subordination, but it also creates and reinforces it. The meaning of the action cannot easily be questioned by the one simultaneously asserting it through their bodily positions and movements.<sup>562</sup> Therefore, understanding the ritual practices of a community, especially during a time of

---

<sup>560</sup> Albertz, "More and Less than a Myth," 29.

<sup>561</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 87-95, 118-20, 123-24.

<sup>562</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 100, 106.

change, is vital to understanding the structure of that community and its identity in relation to others.

### 3.2.1 Non-Exclusive Yahwism

Like many of the biblical writers, one of Ezekiel's main concerns with regard to religious practices is the exclusive worship of Yahweh. The writer's accusations of those who stray from his idealized version of Yahweh-worship can be divided into two categories: the explicit worship of foreign gods, idols, or images; and ritual practices that are deemed suspect due to their perceived association with foreign gods. These accusations are scattered throughout the book of Ezekiel, aimed primarily at the Judean remnant in Jerusalem (though the Jehoiachin exiles are by no means exempt). Yet the highest density by far occurs in Ezekiel 8, where the prophet sees a vision of the Jerusalem Temple and all the practices taking place there.

Charles Torrey was the first to suggest that these activities in the Temple reflect the situation during Manasseh's reign, which the book of Kings blames for the exile.<sup>563</sup> His reasoning is that if such flagrant disobedience to Yahweh's covenant was taking place in his Temple between 597 and 587 BCE, the book of Kings would have mentioned it. However, Jeremiah also claims that there was illicit ritual activity in the Temple during Zedekiah's reign, though does not go into the same amount of detail as Ezekiel 8. For example, Jeremiah 32:34 says: "They set their disgusting things (*šiqqûṣêhem*) in the house where my name is called upon, to defile (*tm* ' ) it."

---

<sup>563</sup> Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel*, 49.

More importantly, Ezekiel 8 is a vision, not a description of reality. It is unlikely that all of the activities the prophet envisions would be taking place in the Temple at any one time in history.<sup>564</sup> Instead, it is an amalgamation of all the ritual activities that compromise the Judeans' exclusive devotion to Yahweh, according to Ezekiel. Some of these may have been practiced in public or private, while others may have been rumours exaggerated by Ezekiel to alienate and condemn the remnant community as much as possible.

### *Idolatry and the Worship of Foreign Gods*

The worship of idols is the practice which Ezekiel most frequently condemns. His preferred term for them is the derogatory *gillûlîm*, a word apparently derived from *gēl*, meaning “dung.” He accuses the Judeans remaining in Judah of idol worship many times, both directly (Ezek 6:4-5; 8:10; 22:3-4) and indirectly (Ezek 18:6, 12).<sup>565</sup> Yet Ezekiel makes it clear that the practice of idol-worship occurs among the community of forced migrants as well. In 14:1-7 the prophet confronts the elders in exile who want a message from Yahweh, saying,

כִּי אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִהֶגֶר אֲשֶׁר־יָגֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנָּזֶר מֵאַחֲרַי וַיַּעַל גְּלוּלָיו אֶל־לִבּוֹ וּמִכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹנוֹ יֵשִׁים נֶכֶח פָּנָיו וְבָא אֶל־הַנְּבִיא לְדַרְשׁ־לּוֹ בִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה גְּעֹנֶה־לּוֹ בִּי:

<sup>564</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, Suppl. to VT 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 67.

<sup>565</sup> Ezekiel's condemnation of idol-worship is so frequent that Heath Dewrell suggests the writer uses it as “antilanguage,” associating it with all forms of syncretistic practice in order to draw the clearest possible boundaries between these and exclusive Yahwism (Dewrell, “Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel,” 186, 191). This interpretation is based on W.R. Domeris' observation that the writer of Jeremiah does a similar thing with syncretistic Yahwism, lumping it together with the worship of Baal, the Queen of Heaven, and Asherah. In this way, Jeremiah redefines social boundaries between those he considers insiders and those he considers outsiders (Domeris, “When Metaphor Becomes a Myth: A Socio-Linguistic Reading of Jeremiah,” in *Troubling Jeremiah*, JSOT Suppl. 260, ed. A.R.P. Diamond, K.M. O'Connor, and L. Stulman [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 244-62 [253-54]).

For each man from the House of Israel or sojourner who is staying in Israel<sup>566</sup> who is dedicated to me but brings up his idols to his heart<sup>567</sup> and puts his stumbling block of iniquity before me, yet comes to a prophet to seek me for himself, will I, Yahweh, be answered to him?" (Ezek 14:7).

John Ahn interprets this accusation as being directed towards the 587 or 582 BCE forced migrants who, having arrived in Babylonia, had introduced their non-exclusive Yahwistic practices into the Judean community there.<sup>568</sup> Yet Ezekiel 14 is situated between two date formulae, the first of which indicates 592 BCE (8:1) and the second, 591 BCE (20:1). The book is not organized in strict chronological order, but all of the date formulae in Chapters 1-25 indicate the period before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, whilst all of the dates from Ezekiel 26:1 onwards refer to 587 BCE and beyond. Additionally, Ezekiel's speech in Chapter 20 is directed at the same group of "men from the elders of Israel" (*'ānāšîm mizziqnê yiśrā'ēl*; 20:1, 3) as his speech in 14:1-7, suggesting that a group of leaders by this name was already part of the community of 597 BCE exiles.<sup>569</sup>

In Ezekiel 20, the forced migrant audience is accused of being contaminated (*tm'*) by their idols until the present day (*'atem niṭmē'im lēkol-gillûlêkem 'ad-hayyôm*; 20:31).

Their motivation for worshipping idols is caricatured in the style of prophetic parodies of

---

<sup>566</sup> Greenberg notes that this formula, which reflects settlement in the land of Israel (Lev 17:8, 10, 13; 20:2; 22:18) is used here despite the exilic context (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 249).

<sup>567</sup> Cf. Ezek 14:4. It is unclear whether the sense of bringing the idols to one's heart refers to a deep dedication to them, or to the fact that the physical idols had been left in Judah and all the exiles could do was remember them with longing (which, to Ezekiel, is still unacceptable; cf. Qoh 9:3 for another reference to evil being contained in the heart).

<sup>568</sup> John Ahn, "Ezekiel 15," 111.

<sup>569</sup> The "elders of Judah" (*zīqnê yēhūdā*) are the prophet Ezekiel's audience in 8:1, who appear to be the same group as the "elders of the house of Israel" (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 166; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 424).



idol-making: they are said to want to be “like the tribes of the lands, worshipping wood and stone” (*kēmišpēḥôt hā`ārāšôt lēšārēt`ēš wā`āben*; 20:32). By naming the materials the idols are made from, Ezekiel reminds his audience of their profane origins and human construction, in contrast to Yahweh who in Ezekiel 20 is an active agent, taking charge of human history.

Therefore, the worship of idols does not distinguish those remaining in Judah from the forced migrants. Both groups are contaminated (*ṭm`*) by it (Ezek 20:18; 22:4; 23:7; 37:23). However, whereas the entire community in Judah is destined for punishment (see Section 3.4.1), Yahweh can single out the individual sinners from his chosen community in Babylonia according to Ezekiel 14:8 and 20:38.

Ezekiel accuses the Judeans remaining in Judah after 597 BCE of many additional non-exclusive Yahwistic practices. As well as worshipping *gillûlîm* (6:4-6, 9, 13; 22:4; 23:7, 30, 37, 39, 49; 33:25; 36:18; 37:23), they are said to make “images” (*šēlāmîm*) of silver and gold (Ezek 7:20; 16:17). Although neither Ezekiel 7 nor 16 explicitly mentions worshipping the images, they are both connected to the Jerusalem Temple. Julie Galambush showed that the woman symbolizing Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16 receives the same gifts from Yahweh as the ornaments and offerings in the Temple. These include *riqmâ*, embroidered cloth; *tāḥaš*, leather; *šēš*, linen (16:10) and *sōlet*, fine flour; and *šemen*, oil (16:13).<sup>570</sup> Instead of using them for the glorification of Yahweh as intended, she gives them away (16:15), makes shrines out of them (16:16) and uses them to make and adorn male images (*šalmê zākār*; 16:17) to whom she offers oil and incense

---

<sup>570</sup> Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife*, SBLDS 130 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 1992), 95-96.

(16:18).<sup>571</sup> Meanwhile, in Ezekiel 7, the ambiguous term “his ornamental beauty” (*šēbī ‘edyô*; 7:20) appears to refer to the Temple, as it occurs in reference to the elite of Jerusalem, who profane Yahweh’s “hidden place” (*šēpūnî*; 7:22). In both cases, the issue at hand is the use of the Temple’s goods or spaces for the veneration of images.

This practice is evoked several times in Ezekiel 8 as well. Although the word *šelem* is not used, the prophet sees an “image of jealousy” (*sēmel haqqin’â*; 8:3, 5) at the opening of the inner gate to the north of the Temple. The unusual use of the term *sēmel* has been much discussed. It is a Phoenician word which only appears three times in the Hebrew Bible outside of Ezekiel 8. Deuteronomy 4:16 forbids the Israelites from making a *sēmel* in the form of a human or an image in any form (*pesel tēmūnat*). In 2 Chronicles 33:7, Manasseh is said to erect a *pesel hassēmel* in the Temple, but in verse 15 he removes it after his change of heart and newfound devotion to Yahweh. The account of this event in 2 Kings 21 uses the term *pesel hā’āšērâ* (21:7) where the Chronicler has *pesel hassēmel*. In the Deuteronomistic History, it is Josiah who removes, burns, and pulverizes Manasseh’s image (2 Kgs 23:6). Manasseh never experiences a change of heart in this version of events. Therefore, most commentators conclude that the *sēmel haqqin’â* in Ezekiel 8:3 and 5 refers to a statue of Asherah like Manasseh’s.<sup>572</sup> The accounts in both Chronicles and Kings claim that the statue Manasseh erected was destroyed long before Ezekiel’s time. It is possible that a new one was created, or, if

---

<sup>571</sup> Odell interprets the *šalmê zākār* as Neo-Assyrian royal statues placed in their vassal territories as reminders of their imperial control. The ritual activities mentioned in Ezek 16:17-19 are compatible with what is known about the veneration of royal images, which Ezekiel would have considered a breach of exclusive, aniconic Yahwism (Odell, “Fragments of Traumatic Memory,” 114, 116).

<sup>572</sup> Middlemas, *Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 92.

Ezekiel's vision in Chapter 8 refers to rituals taking place in the land more generally, that it symbolizes ongoing Asherah worship in sixth-century BCE Judah.<sup>573</sup>

The other mention of images in the Temple occurs in Ezekiel 8:10-12, where the prophet sees depictions (*tabnît*) of various creatures and idols carved on the walls of chambers around the Temple court. Among the animals it is specified that at least two are unclean: the *remeš* which crawl on the ground, and the *šeqeš*, which according to Leviticus 11:10-42 are forbidden to eat as food.<sup>574</sup> Jeremiah agrees that the Judeans had placed *šiqqûšîm* in the Temple, without specifying what these are (Jer 7:30; 32:34). The description of these images again echoes Deuteronomy 4:16-18, which bans the Israelites from creating a *tabnît* of any human, animal, bird, creeping thing, or fish.

Ezekiel ensures that all possible bases are covered when it comes to accusing the Judean remnant of worshipping images, using yet another term in 8:12, *maškit*. This object is associated with the Canaanites in Numbers 33:52, as the Israelites are instructed to destroy all the *maškiyôt* they find in the land (alongside the *šēlāmîm*). Leviticus 26:1 declares that it was forbidden to bow down to an '*eben maškit* (alongside the *pesel* and the *maššēbâ*). It is unclear exactly what a *maškit* was, or how it differed from the other

---

<sup>573</sup> Cf. Jer 17:2.

<sup>574</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 169. Milgrom points out that for the Priestly writer, what is *šeqeš* is not as impure as what is *tāmē'*, because whilst what is *šeqeš* is forbidden to be eaten in Lev 11:1-42, what is *tāmē'* cannot be eaten or even touched. Additionally, the category of being *tāmē'* requires purity rituals before one is pure (*tāhōr*) again, whereas there is no indication that contact with something *šeqeš* necessitates such a process. However, Lev 11:44-45 conflates the terms *šeqeš* and *tāmē'*, which Milgrom attributes to a later Holiness Code insertion. He claims that H uses both terms to mean revile or abominate, whilst Deuteronomy also conflates them and uses them primarily of idolatry. Ezekiel 8:10-12 knows of all three traditions, since it separates the *šeqeš* from the quadrupeds, the *bēhēmâ*, as P does; it mentions the *šeqeš* in conjunction with the *remeš*, as H does (e.g. in Lev 20:25); but it subordinates both to Deuteronomic influence because the context is one of idolatry (Milgrom, "Two Biblical Hebrew Priestly Terms," 107-109, 114-15).

types of images listed above. The only evidence for the possible function of the *maškit* comes from the eighth-century BCE Old Aramaic inscription for Pannamuwa II:

*whqm . lh . mšky . b'rḥ .*

And [Tiglath-Pileser III] erected a distinctive stone (*mšky*) for him on the road. (KAI 215, 18a)

Since the inscription refers to Pannamuwa II's death and burial, the *mšky* most likely functions as a funerary marker. The translation "distinctive stone" was first suggested by Victor Hurowitz based on the meaning of the root *šky*: "to look at." Additionally, the Greek version of Leviticus 26:1 has *lithon skopon*, "distinctive stone," for the Hebrew *maškit*.<sup>575</sup> Whether these stones were always funerary markers or could have diverse functions is impossible to say without further evidence. If they were generally associated with the deceased, the law against bowing down to them in Leviticus 26:1 may refer to ancestor worship or necromancy.

Ezekiel 8:12 suggests that each of the seventy elders of Israel whom the prophet sees paying homage to the figures (*tabnît*) carved on the wall of the Temple court has his own *maškit* in his chamber. Whether this refers to a separate practice which the elders carry out in their homes (as per Greenberg) or individual cubicles or rooms situated in the Temple court (Block) is difficult to say.<sup>576</sup> However, the irony of their situation is clear: they claim that Yahweh cannot see them because he has left the land (8:12). For Ezekiel, it is their stone *maškit* who cannot see them, whilst Yahweh's observation of these actions causes him to leave the land.

---

<sup>575</sup> Victor Hurowitz, "אבן מסכית: A New Interpretation," *JBL* 118/2 (1999), 201-208 (203).

<sup>576</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 170; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 291.

As the vision in Ezekiel 8 progresses, the prophet witnesses increasingly scandalous practices, culminating in the explicit worship of two foreign deities. In 8:14, he sees women “mourning for the Tammuz” (*mēbakkôt ’et-hattammûz*) in the gate of the Temple. Tammuz, not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, is typically associated with the Mesopotamian Dumuzi cult. Traditions concerning Dumuzi may date as early as the third millennium BCE and are varied, but two of the most pervasive concern Dumuzi’s nature as a shepherd god and his courtship of the goddess Inanna/ Ishtar.<sup>577</sup> From the Old Babylonian period until the first millennium BCE, there is evidence that mourning rituals for Dumuzi took place in Mesopotamia, often associated with female practitioners (e.g. ARM 9 175; CT 58, 15 no. 21).<sup>578</sup> There is no evidence outside of Ezekiel 8:14 that suggests the Judeans adopted Dumuzi traditions, but neither is there reason to doubt that some did so, given their long-lasting contact with Mesopotamia.<sup>579</sup>

The definite object preceding the word “Tammuz” presents a similar issue to the definite article which often accompanies the word “Asherah” in the Hebrew Bible (and

---

<sup>577</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 295. Thorkild Jacobsen (*The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976], 36-55) saw Dumuzi as having four distinct forms related to dates, grain, milk, and tree sap. However, later examination of the Mesopotamian evidence revealed that there was no reliable evidence to support Dumuzi’s affiliation with dates or grain; his true nature was that of a shepherd who brought farm products to Inanna to win her hand in marriage (B. Alster, “Tammuz,” *DDD*, 1568-79 [1569]).

<sup>578</sup> Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 52. There is evidence that Dumuzi was worshiped in Mesopotamia from the mid-third millennium BCE onwards, when a spring festival seems to have been held to celebrate his marriage to Inanna. During the Ur III and Isin I periods, the ruler may have played the role of Dumuzi in such festivals. Later evidence (OB onwards) attests to a festival in which his death was mourned (Alster, “Tammuz,” 1573-75; F.A.M. Wiggerman, “Agriculture as Civilization: Sages, Farmers, and Barbarians,” in *OHCC*, 663-89 [678]).

<sup>579</sup> Stökl, “A Youth Without Blemish,” 233.

“Baal” in Judges 10:6):<sup>580</sup> It is unusual for the article to precede a proper noun in biblical Hebrew. The most common solution to this issue is to suggest that the words refer to cult objects associated with those deities.<sup>581</sup> Daniel Block suggests that Yahweh may have been associated with Dumuzi during this period of Judean history, and that the mourning was for his perceived departure from the land. The phrase *mēbakkôt ’et-hattammûz* would work syntactically if translated “weeping the Tammuz,” that is, using the Dumuzi mourning ritual as part of the Yahweh cult.<sup>582</sup> Even if this were the case, the ritual’s association with a foreign deity was frowned upon by members of the Priestly circle such as Ezekiel.

The final travesty in Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple occurs in 8:16, where the prophet sees “about 25 men” bowing down to the Shamash (*mištaḥāwîtem qēdmâ laššāmeš*) in the entrance of the Temple, between the porch and the altar.<sup>583</sup> The

---

<sup>580</sup> Cf. the Kuntillet Ajrud inscription where “Asherah” has the archaic masculine singular possessive suffix:

*lyhwh.šmrn.wl’šrth*

To Yhwh of Samaria and his Asherah (Inscription 3.1, Line 2).

*lyhwh tymn wl’šrth*

To Yhwh of Teman and his Asherah (Inscription 3.6 Lines 5-7 [Cf. Inscriptions 3.9 and 4.1.1]).

Shmuel Ahituv, Esther Eshel, and Ze’ev Meshel, “The Inscriptions,” in *Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman)*, ed. Ze’ev Meshel (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 73-142 (87-105).

<sup>581</sup> E.g. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 294-95. However, James Barr (“‘Determination’ and the Definite Article in Biblical Hebrew,” *JSS* 34/2 [1989] 307-35) has sought to show that “the Hebrew definite article is not strictly, but only loosely and generally, related to determination” (309). For example, he points out that the definite article is sometimes used with Hebrew nouns that are clearly non-determinate, such as the proverb in Amos 5:19: “It is as if a man fled before *ha’āri* (a lion) and was met by *hadōb* (a bear)” (312-13). Barr concludes that “the Hebrew Bible displays the article in the course of a process of change. Its dominant role as a marker of determination has still not become universally established, and lies alongside a variety of other usages and functions” (333). Therefore, it is wise to practice caution when attempting to draw conclusions from the presence of absence of a definite article in biblical Hebrew.

<sup>582</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 294-95. Dumuzi was associated with the divine abandonment motif in Mesopotamian tradition for a time. Mourning was a way to arouse the pity of the deity so that they would return to the sanctuary they had abandoned.

<sup>583</sup> The Hebrew word *šemeš* (in pause here, causing the writing *šāmeš*) is the regular term for the sun. As shown above, it is difficult to determine the significance of the use of the definite article. Whether the

innermost part of the Temple is revealed in this part of Ezekiel's vision, as is a form of worship most clearly associated with a Mesopotamian deity. The men have their backs to Yahweh's altar, showing their physical rejection of their native deity in favour of this foreign one.<sup>584</sup> Sun worship is explicitly forbidden in Deuteronomy 4:19. Yet it was practiced by King Manasseh according to 2 Kings 21:5, which claims that he made altars for the host of heaven in the courts of the Temple. Furthermore, Josiah is said to dispose of horses and chariots dedicated to the sun (2 Kgs 23:11) and priests who made offerings to the sun and other astral bodies (2 Kgs 23:5). Nevertheless, Jeremiah accuses the kings, princes, priests, prophets, and residents of Judah of worshipping the sun, moon, and "Host of Heaven" (Jer 8:1-2).

J. Glen Taylor argues that the worship of heavenly bodies, including the sun, was long practised as part of Yahwism and should not be attributed to foreign influence (at least not Neo-Babylonian influence). Jeremiah and Ezekiel were in line with Deuteronomistic theology when they considered it unacceptable, but they may have been in the minority in Jerusalem.<sup>585</sup>

---

Judeans were worshipping the sun or the Mesopotamian god Shamash, who was represented by the sun, seems like an arbitrary distinction. The important factor is that they were worshipping a deity other than Yahweh.

<sup>584</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 244; J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, JSOT Suppl. 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 148-58. Taylor notes that the same two concerns exhibited in Ezek 8:16 (about the direction of prayer and confusion about Yahweh's location) are also voiced in 1 Kgs 8:12, 22-61. The passage from 1 Kgs 8 is describing Yahweh entering Solomon's temple for the first time, whereas Ezekiel 8 is a prelude to Yahweh leaving it. He also suggests that the raising of branches mentioned in Ezek 8:17 refers to the Feast of Booths when branches were held upwards towards Yahweh; the worshippers' focus on the sun would have been especially offensive in this context.

<sup>585</sup> J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 197-99. Taylor bases his argument concerning the longstanding Israelite association of sun-worship with Yahwism on both archaeological and textual evidence. Much of the archaeological evidence is based on the association of horses with sun-worship in 2 Kgs 23:11, including the Taanach cult stand and horse figurines, as well as sun disc motifs and the solar orientation of cult statues (24-91). The textual evidence amounts to the Deuteronomistic passages cited above as well as

Therefore, Ezekiel's visions of the illicit activity taking place in the Jerusalem Temple draw from the same traditions as the Holiness Code and Deuteronomy (especially Deut 4:16-19), but also reflect many of the practices Manasseh was known for in the Deuteronomistic History. These similarities do not end with the worship of foreign gods, idols, and images, but continue throughout Ezekiel 8 and beyond.

#### *Potentially Syncretistic or Unauthorized Ritual Practices*

Ezekiel condemns several practices which may have been conducted as part of Yahweh-worship but which he nevertheless considers unacceptable. One of these is the use of particular types of incense or incense burners. The *ḥammān* incense altar is portrayed as something illicit in Ezekiel 6:4-6, where Yahweh promises to destroy altars, incense altars, and idols all together. Its use in the worship of idols is probably what Ezekiel objects to, but evidence from the rest of the Hebrew Bible suggests that this cultic object was never considered an acceptable element of Yahweh worship by the biblical writers. Where the *ḥammān* appears elsewhere, it is associated with high places (Lev 26:20; 2 Chron 14:5) and the *ʾāšērîm* (Isa 17:8; 27:9; 2 Chron 34:4, 7). In Ezekiel 6:6, which is directed at the "mountains of Israel," high places (*bāmôt*) are also mentioned. The association of the *ḥammān* with other practices common in popular religion and not centered at the Jerusalem Temple means that its use by the Judean remnant is frowned upon by Ezekiel.

The other type of incense burner mentioned in Ezekiel in an illicit ritual context is the *miqṭeret*, which the seventy elders in the Temple use before their images in Ezekiel

---

the expression "Yahweh of Hosts"/ "Host of Heaven;" and passages such as Josh 10:12-14; 1 Kgs 8:12; Isa 58:8-10; 60:1-3; Zeph 1:5; Mal 4:2 (Heb.); Job 31:26; Ps 19; 104 (92-256).



8:11. The nature of this object may be informed by the Moabite Mudayna incense stand, which bears the word *mqṭr* in reference to itself.<sup>586</sup> It is 96 cm tall, conical in shape, and decorated with carved rows of pendant petals on each segment as well as painted patterns and a palm tree design. Its function as an incense altar is suggested by a cup-shaped depression, stained with soot, on its top.<sup>587</sup> In Ezekiel 8:11, each man is said to hold his own *miqṭeret* in his hand (*wē'îš miqṭartô bēyādô*), so a smaller version of an incense stand may have been in mind here. Something the size of the Mudayna incense stand, which is made of limestone, would have been unwieldy to carry, though not impossible. Although the instrument in itself is not condemned in this passage, its use for the veneration of images of animals and idols in Yahweh's Temple certainly is.

Whenever the *miqṭeret* is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible it is associated with Yahweh worship, or at least worship that took place in Jerusalem. However, like the *ḥammān* incense altar, it is only mentioned in negative contexts. It appears two times outside of Ezekiel 8: once when Uzziah usurps a priestly role and offers incense in the Temple in 2 Chronicles 26:19; and once in 2 Chronicles 30:14 when Hezekiah removes all the altars and *mēqatṭērôt* from Jerusalem.<sup>588</sup> The first instance is particularly

---

<sup>586</sup> The complete inscription has been transliterated and translated by P.M. Daviau and Margaret Steiner ("A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat al-Mudayna," BASOR 320 [2000], 1-21 [11]) as follows:

*mqṭr 'š 'š 'lsm'*

*lysp bt 'wt*

The incense altar that Elishama made  
for *ysp* daughter of 'wt.

The date of this inscription is debated. Christopher A. Rollston (*Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* [Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2010], 62-63) suggests the first half of the 8th century BCE.

<sup>587</sup> Daviau and Steiner, "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat al-Mudayna," 10-11.

<sup>588</sup> Though here the pointing of the word is slightly different: *mēqatṭeret* for the singular instead of *miqṭeret*. The former is a *hapax* in the Hebrew Bible.

significant for interpreting Ezekiel 8:11. Not only does it suggest that the *miqṭeret* was already present in Yahweh's Temple as part of the normal ritual that took place there; it also deals with a case of a lay leader (the king) inappropriately conducting ritual in the Temple, as the seventy elders are doing in Ezekiel's vision. The use of incense (*qēṭōret*) is an accepted part of Yahweh worship, instructed to be carried out by priests in the Tabernacle throughout Exodus 30-40 and Numbers 7 and 16. It is only frowned upon when offered hypocritically (e.g. Isa 1:13) or to any deity other than Yahweh (Ezek 16:18; 23:41). The full weight of the elders' sin in Ezekiel 8 comes from their status as lay-people conducting priestly activity, their worship of images and idols, and the location in the court of Yahweh's Temple.

#### *Yahweh's Departure from the Temple*

Ezekiel's description of all this ritual activity, which is out of keeping with the principles of exclusive Yahwism central to the Deuteronomic and Priestly ideals, prepares the way for the end of his vision: Yahweh's departure from the Temple in Ezekiel 11:22-23. In Ezekiel 8:6, Yahweh introduces the visions of the Temple with the question:

הֲרָאָה אַתָּה מָהֶם [מָה] [הֵם] עֹשִׂים תּוֹעֲבוֹת גְּדֻלוֹת אֲשֶׁר בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל | עֹשִׂים פֹּה לְרִחֲקָה מֵעַל מִקְדָּשִׁי וְעוֹד  
תָּשׁוּב תִּרְאֶה תּוֹעֲבוֹת גְּדֻלוֹת:

Do you see what they are doing: great abominations which the house of Israel is doing here, *to distance [me]* from my sanctuary? And yet you will see even greater abominations (Ezek 8:6).

The precise meaning of the verb *lēroḥōqā* ("to be distant") is unclear as it has no object. The implied object is Yahweh himself: he is the one who ends up being distant from his

sanctuary in Ezekiel 11 in the same way the forced migrants are distant (*rḥq*) from the sanctuary at the time of this vision (11:15). Again, this logic counters the Jerusalemites' claim that they must be the inheritors of Yahweh's covenant, since the forced migrant group has been removed from Judah.

Ezekiel shows that even though those who remained in Judah are physically present in the land and Temple, their practices defile (*tm'*) both (Ezek 5:11; 22:3-5, 10-11, 26) such that the forced migrants are better off in a foreign country; even Yahweh himself has to depart. The purpose of the moving creatures and wheels accompanying Yahweh in Ezekiel's inaugural vision (Ezek 1:14-21) becomes evident in 11:22-23 when both rise up from the Temple and transport the *kēbôd 'ēlōhê-yisrā'el* out of the city and onto "the mountain to the east" (*hāhār 'āšer miqedem lā 'îr*; 11:23).<sup>589</sup> This mobility means that Yahweh is able to be absent from his Temple when the Babylonian army destroys it, an event which the ritual practices of the Judean remnant have rendered necessary.

### 3.2.2 Excursus: Yahweh's Body

The issue of Yahweh's presence or absence is clearly one that is on Ezekiel's mind. Yet the nature of how Ezekiel understands this concept has been the subject of much discussion. This is particularly significant in light of the author's vehement denunciation of idols and images, suggesting he takes a strictly aniconic approach to Yahwism. Yet the book of Ezekiel contains a more detailed description of the physical appearance of Yahweh than any other part of the Hebrew Bible. This raises the question of whether the writer envisioned God as having a body, and, if so, what kind of body it might be.

---

<sup>589</sup> See n. 606 for a discussion of which location this may refer to.

Whenever Ezekiel describes Yahweh (which he only does in his vision narratives of Chapters 1-3 and 8-11), he refers to the *kēbôd Yhwh* (1:28; 3:12, 23; 10:4, 18; 11:23; 43:4-5; 44:4). The use of this title could be Ezekiel's way of indicating that it was an attribute or hypostasis of Yahweh that was revealed to him. If this is the case, our discussion concerns whether it is the *kēbôd Yhwh* which has a body in the book of Ezekiel. However, there are several reasons to believe that Ezekiel uses the term *kēbôd Yhwh* to refer to the real presence of the deity.<sup>590</sup> First, this title occurs frequently in the Priestly writings of the Pentateuch as a term synonymous with the God of Israel.<sup>591</sup> Although the Priestly writers never use anthropomorphic imagery to describe Yahweh, it is clear that his *kābôd* is his one, unified self that can only be in one place at a time.<sup>592</sup>

Several aspects of Ezekiel's descriptions of Yahweh suggest the writer is intentionally evoking Priestly traditions concerning the *kēbôd Yhwh*. For example, he uses cloud (*'ānān*; Ezek 1:4), fire (*'ēš*; Ezek 1:4), and radiance imagery (including *nšš*, sparkling; Ezek 1:7; *qālāl*, polished; Ezek 1:7; *bārāq*, lightning, Ezek 1:13; *bāzāq*, flash, Ezek 1:14) typically associated with the *kēbôd Yhwh* (e.g. Exod 24:15-18; 40:34ff; Lev 9:24ff; Num 14:14; 16:35).

Furthermore, Ezekiel's extremely vivid yet cautious description of the *kēbôd Yhwh* suggests he is evoking the real thing for his audience. The *kēbôd Yhwh* is accompanied by

---

<sup>590</sup> Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>591</sup> Robin C. McCall, "The Body and Being of God in Ezekiel," *Review and Expositor* 111/4 (2014), 376-89 (381).

<sup>592</sup> Ibid. 383. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 68.

his cherub host (Ezek 10:2-9, 14-20; 11:22<sup>593</sup>), his chariot (Ezek 1:15-21; 10:2, 9-17; 11:22), and his throne (Ezek 1:26; 10:1). Ezekiel does not claim to have seen the *kābôd* directly, but rather the appearance of its likeness (*mar'ēh dēmût kēbôd-Yhwh*; 1:28) and even this brings the prophet to the ground (*wā'er'eh wā'epōl 'al-pānay*; 1:28). Not only does the significance of Ezekiel's vision in Chapters 1-3 rely on Yahweh's presence, but the build-up to the *kēbôd Yhwh's* departure from the Temple in Ezekiel 11:23 would be anticlimactic if the departure of the real and entire Yahweh was not what was intended.<sup>594</sup>

However, several scholars have pointed out that Ezekiel's description of the *kēbôd Yhwh* does not exactly match up with the Priestly tradition. There are elements of Ezekiel's theophany that correspond more closely to the Zion-Sabaoth tradition of Yahweh as king in Jerusalem. For example, Ezekiel describes Yahweh as above the cherubim, as he is in Psalm 18:11 (Heb.) and 2 Sam 22:11. Some argue that the Zion-Sabaoth tradition allows for both a more anthropomorphic view of Yahweh and a fluid version of Godself whereby he can be both enthroned in Jerusalem and present elsewhere at the same time.<sup>595</sup>

The anthropomorphic part of this tradition would appear to have influenced Ezekiel's description of "a likeness with the appearance of a human" (*dēmût kēmar'ēh 'ādām*; 1:26) which has at least the appearance of a waist (*mar'ēh mātnāyw*; 1:27) and a hand (1:3, 3:14, 22; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1) and wears a garment (metaphorically, in 16:8). In

---

<sup>593</sup> Additionally, in Ezek 9:3, the *kēbôd Yhwh* rests on a cherub in the threshold of the Temple, and in Ezek 41:18, the writer envisages cherubim being carved on the walls of the new Temple, including around the door to the inner sanctuary.

<sup>594</sup> McCall, "The Body and Being of God," 381.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 378-79.

addition, Yahweh's throne is said to be above the dome of the sky (the *rāqî'â* in Ezek 1:22), locating him in heaven while he is present on earth. One more element of Ezekiel's description reflects the Zion-Sabaoth tradition: his use of the term *nōgah*, brightness, which fits with the general account of *kābôd* as radiance, but never occurs in the Priestly tradition.<sup>596</sup>

Based on all these factors, Tryggve Mettinger was first to suggest that Ezekiel combined Priestly and Zion-Sabaoth traditions in order to create a new perception of Yahweh that worked for the sixth-century BCE exilic context.<sup>597</sup> This allowed for both the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple (which Ezekiel, as a Jerusalemite priest, cannot abandon), as well as Yahweh's presence with the forced migrants during a period when his people are not united.<sup>598</sup> Others, such as John Strong, have modified this view, for example claiming that the *kābôd* elements that Ezekiel uses are native to the Zion-Sabaoth tradition and do not represent the addition of Priestly beliefs.<sup>599</sup> Strong sees the *kābôd* as the hypostasis of the enthroned Yahweh, which carries out Yahweh's fight against Chaos in the unclean parts of the earth (which during Ezekiel's time included Israel and the Jerusalem Temple).<sup>600</sup>

---

<sup>596</sup> Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian Melammu," 13-14.

<sup>597</sup> Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kābôd Theologies*, ConBOT 18 (Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 24ff.

<sup>598</sup> McCall, "The Body and Being of God," 388.

<sup>599</sup> Strong, "God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, SBLSS 9 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000), 69-95 (69).

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 73.

The main problem with this interpretation is that it leaves Yahweh enthroned in the Temple during the Babylonian destruction. Ezekiel 11:22-23 is very specific in its description of Yahweh (accompanied by throne, chariot, and cherubim) leaving the Temple behind due to its impurities and in preparation for its destruction. Only once the Temple has been rebuilt and its purity restored will Yahweh return (43:2).

Shawn Aster's suggestion that Ezekiel's description of Yahweh was influenced by the Mesopotamian tradition of *melammu* is more convincing. He points out that the Priestly source does not have one unifying description of the *kēbôd Yhwh*: sometimes it uses cloud, other times fire or radiance imagery.<sup>601</sup> Therefore, although Ezekiel uses many elements of the *kēbôd Yhwh* tradition, it cannot strictly be said that the book contains a "Priestly" description of what the *kēbôd Yhwh* looked like. Ezekiel's own version of the *kēbôd Yhwh* is consistent and includes elements not known to the Priestly writers, such as *nōgah*, noted above, and *ḥašmāl*.<sup>602</sup> Aster concludes that Ezekiel was influenced by Neo-Assyrian images and Neo-Babylonian textual descriptions of gods and kings surrounded by *melammu*, a radiance that stunned their enemies and guaranteed them success in warfare.<sup>603</sup>

It may be that Ezekiel consciously or sub-consciously drew from all these traditions to present Yahweh in as glorious and awe-inspiring a way as possible. Yet whilst the *kēbôd Yhwh* is the manner in which God is present in Ezekiel, it seems to hide and protect something even more personal to Yahweh: his body. The prophet's glimpse of the shape

---

<sup>601</sup> Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian Melammu," 12.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid., 14 (though Aster is wrong that Ezekiel never mentions cloud; it appears in 1:4).

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 15.

of a human body (“an image of a man’s appearance;” *dēmût kēmar’ēh ’ādām*; 1:26) behind all the various forms of light hints at what a writer in the Priestly tradition could not say, but knew to be true. Yahweh had a body which could only be present in one place at a time. That is why Ezekiel’s visions of Yahweh took place in Jerusalem instead of Babylon when Yahweh was located in Jerusalem.

However, Yahweh’s possession of a body does not mean he has the limits of a human body.<sup>604</sup> Yahweh’s body is made of what looks like gleaming metal (*kē’ēn ḥašmal*) and fire (*kēmar’ēh ’ēš*; 1:27). He can communicate with (and even physically move) Ezekiel from a distance via his *rûah* (2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 11:24; 36:26-27; 37:1, 5-14). It is in this sense that he has been a “sanctuary” to them in Babylonia (11:16). Yahweh’s lack of physical presence among the forced migrants did not entail his physical presence in Jerusalem, as Ezekiel shows in 11:22-23. Instead, Yahweh waits in neutral territory, a mountain to the east of Jerusalem (11:23),<sup>605</sup> until the land has been cleansed and he can return to the sanctuary of his choice with the correct leadership reinstated (43:2).

---

<sup>604</sup> Lewis labels Ezekiel’s depiction of Yahweh “fiery transcendent anthropomorphism,” noting the longstanding tradition of Yahweh appearing with or via a fiery human form in the Hebrew Bible. He notes: “Ezekiel no more thought of Yahweh as a mere man than did Aššur’s artists envision their majestic deity as being a simple mortal. Radiant deities—though anthropomorphic at a glance—can manifest their power and majesty by flying through air engulfed in fire” (Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God*). Similarly, Benjamin Sommer describes God’s body in the Hebrew Bible as “stunningly bright... made of energy rather than matter” (Sommer, *The Bodies of God*, 2, cf. 68-71).

<sup>605</sup> Fohrer (*Ezekiel*, 61-62) was first to suggest that Ezekiel’s use of the term “east of Jerusalem” was a reference to Babylonia. Whilst this interpretation fits with Ezekiel’s belief that Yahweh has chosen the forced migrants rather than the Jerusalemites, it would mean that the deity moved from one unclean place (Jerusalem) to another (Babylonia; Ezek 4:13). Additionally, it is unlikely that Babylonia would be referred to as “the mountain to the east of Jerusalem” (although see Barr on the ambiguity of the Hebrew definite article, “‘Determination’ and the Definite Article,” 312-13). A more natural interpretation would be the Mount of Olives. Greenberg suggests, based on a Midrash of Jer 3:22 (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 13.11), that Yahweh waited nearby for a change of heart in Jerusalem’s residents (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 191).



In these ways, Ezekiel informs his community on the nature of acceptable versus unacceptable divine bodies. He identifies the location of the presence of Yahweh and what motivates his movement. Thus, Ezekiel maintains a priestly level of control over access to the deity even in exile.

### 3.2.3 Sacred Time

Another way in which Ezekiel highlights the distinction between the forced migrant community and the one in Judah is through the restructuring of time. Ezekiel describes a full and detailed cultic calendar for his envisaged Second Temple, including which sacrifices should be conducted every Sabbath, every New Moon, and every feast day. These represent important occasions for the identity expression of the community. Peter Altmann writes: “Food in centralized festive celebrations, as well as localized meals, is a literary *topos* for the construction and maintenance of the common Israelite story and shared identity in Deuteronomy.”<sup>606</sup>

As already demonstrated, Ezekiel makes use of many of the same principles of Israelite identity as the book of Deuteronomy. Ezekiel’s description of the state of the Jerusalem Temple between 597 and 587 BCE indicates that he does not consider the feasts and sacrifices proper to Yahweh worship to have been carried out correctly during this period. If they were carried out at all, their efficacy would have been undermined, in Ezekiel’s view, by the non-Yahwistic worship taking place in Judah at the same time. Ezekiel does not believe that the Sabbath is correctly observed by the remnant, claiming

---

<sup>606</sup> Peter Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel: Deuteronomy’s Identity Politics in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, BZAW 424 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 2.

that this is one of the elements of the covenant with Yahweh which the remnant has forsaken (Ezek 22:8, 26).

The extent to which the Judeans in Babylonia could observe festivals without a Temple, and especially the sacrifices which accompanied them, is uncertain. Yet it seems that aspects of calendrical observance which could be practised in a family and household setting became increasingly important as a result. Structuring time according to these markers would have distinguished the Judeans in Babylonia from the other people groups around them,<sup>607</sup> as well as potentially from the Judeans remaining in Judah whom Ezekiel considered to have lapsed from these observances.

The organization of time according to sacred principles is one of the most influential bodily practices expressing communal identity. Catherine Bell writes: “Through the orchestration in time of loose but strategically organized oppositions, in which a few oppositions quietly come to dominate others, the social body internalizes the principles of the environment being delineated.”<sup>608</sup> Bourdieu showed how divisions of social order, including social time, contribute to the reproduction of that order (i.e. hierarchization) by producing orchestrated practices. The organization of time in accordance with mythical structures makes collective practices appear to be the realization of myth.<sup>609</sup>

---

<sup>607</sup> In terms of their Babylonian setting, Kathleen Abraham has suggested based on her study of Judeo-Babylonian marriage contracts that the Judeans in Babylonia did not observe the distinction between auspicious and inauspicious days in the Babylonian calendar (Abraham, “Negotiating Marriage in Multicultural Babylonia: An Example from the Judean Community in Āl-Yāhūdū,” in *Exile and Return*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzegars [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015], 33-57 [56 n.73]).

<sup>608</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 99. Likewise, Mary Douglas: “A ritual provides a frame. The marked off time or place alerts a special kind of expectancy” (Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 63).

<sup>609</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 163.

An example of an opposition like this is the perception of Sabbaths and feast days as sacred, whilst other days are profane. Such a structured sense of time is especially important when sacred space is inaccessible. For example, Jonathan Z. Smith showed how early Christian pilgrimages of the Holy Land were gradually replaced by the cultic calendar. Where it was once a custom for believers to mark the events of the lives of Jesus and the apostles by visiting sacred sites in Jerusalem and beyond, as this became less and less accessible to the majority of the Christian population, a new method for observing these events had to be devised. Thus, the cultic calendar was developed, whereby events were marked in time annually on the dates associated with their original occurrence. The “ritualized structure of temporality,” available to everyone, overcame the “particularity of space” that was only available to a few.<sup>610</sup> The feast days provided unifying occasions for the community that celebrated them.

The same could be said of the Sabbaths, New Moons, and Passovers that Ezekiel dictated the Judeans in Babylonia should continue to observe. Even if sacrifices could not be offered without a Temple, the Sabbath rest days and Passover meal could easily be observed within the family.<sup>611</sup> The strict adherence to such a calendar, especially the Sabbath days which became such a key identity marker in Second Temple Judaism, probably increased the forced migrants’ sense that they and not those who remained in Judah were the true people of Yahweh.<sup>612</sup>

---

<sup>610</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 94.

<sup>611</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 4; Albertz, “More and Less Than a Myth,” 31.

<sup>612</sup> Albertz, “More and Less Than a Myth,” 29. Cf. Neh 10:33; 13:15-22; Isa 56:2, 6; 58:13; 66:23

### *Date Formulae*

Ezekiel's method of dating the exile is the clearest sign that he intentionally marked time in a way that was distinct from the Judeans in Judah. He considered the exile to Babylonia a cataclysmic event in the lives and shared history of his community, and therefore the moment from which everything else should be dated. What is even more significant is that Ezekiel specifically dates his visions by "the exile of King Jehoiachin" (*gālūt hammelek yōyākīn*; 1:2), which he also calls "our exile" (*gālūtēnū*; 33:21; 40:1). This suggests Ezekiel's continued recognition of Jehoiachin's reign. The ending of the Deuteronomistic History in 2 Kings 25:27-30 suggests the same by indicating that Jehoiachin's removal from Babylonian prison might be a hopeful sign for the future.<sup>613</sup> Ezekiel's faithfulness to Jehoiachin is further reflected by his prediction that Jehoiachin or his descendant will return to Judah to be "planted" by Yahweh, if not as a king then at least as a "noble cedar" which will provide shelter (Ezek 17:22-23).<sup>614</sup>

Zedekiah, although a Davidic heir, is not recognized by Ezekiel as the rightful king of Judah. Ezekiel's main criticism of the replacement king is his relaxed attitude towards his treaty with the Babylonian king, which the prophet predicts will cause further trouble for Judah (Ezek 17:1-24). Since the primary reason for Judah's impending destruction, according to Ezekiel, is the remaining population's unfaithfulness to their covenant with Yahweh, Zedekiah's unfaithfulness to his political covenant is symptomatic of this

---

<sup>613</sup> The same event is recorded at the end of the book of Jeremiah (Jer 52:31-34).

<sup>614</sup> Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 143. See discussion about Ezekiel's view of the Davidic *nās'î* in Section 3.3.3.

behaviour.<sup>615</sup> As king, he represents the head of the leadership that replaced Ezekiel and his cohort. Therefore, it is imperative to Ezekiel's ideology that Zedekiah's rulership is undermined and Jehoiachin, the king in exile, is presented as the true heir of the Davidic throne and covenant.

### *The Sabbath*

As for more clearly ritualized concepts of time, the Sabbath is of the utmost importance to Ezekiel. He presents it as a core element of Yahweh's covenant with Israel in his salvation history of Chapter 20, occurring as the third element alongside Yahweh's statutes (*ḥuqqôt*) and judgements (*mišpāṭîm*). The Israelites are accused of constantly abandoning all three of these in the cycle of sin, punishment, and forgiveness that constitutes their shared history. Verses 12-13 tell of the initial covenant "sign" (*ʾôl*) of the Sabbath and the Israelites' subsequent failure to uphold it:

וְגַם אֶת־שַׁבָּתוֹתַי נָתַתִּי לָהֶם לְהִיּוֹת לְאוֹת בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיהֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשָׁם: וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא־הָלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי מָאֲסוּ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאֲדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם וְאֶת־שַׁבָּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ מְאֹד וְאָמַר  
לְשַׁפֹּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר לְכָלֹתָם:

I even gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between me and them, to know that I, Yahweh, sanctify them.<sup>13</sup> But the House of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not walk in my statutes and they despised my judgements (which, if a man does them, he will live by them) and they profaned my Sabbaths greatly. I said I would pour out my anger on them in the wilderness, to end them. (Ezek 20:12-13)

The mention of the Sabbath as part of Yahweh's covenant with Israel during their wilderness period suggests that Ezekiel recognizes its observance as a pre-exilic

<sup>615</sup> Though note that Jeremiah, who remains in Jerusalem after 597 BCE, is critical of Zedekiah's reign (Jer 52:1-2), revealing that there were divisions within the community who remained as well.

innovation, albeit one that was not properly observed. This is supported by its occurrence in the Deuteronomic decalogue (Deut 5:12-15), as well as the accusations of the pre-exilic prophets that observance of the Sabbath is useless if accompanied by sinful actions (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:11) or that it was not taking place at all (Amos 8:5).<sup>616</sup>

Ezekiel's suggestion that the Judeans are not observing the Sabbath during his lifetime (Ezek 22:8, 26) is reinforced by the accounts in Jeremiah and Lamentations (Jer 17:21-27; Lam 2:6). Interestingly, Lamentations states that Sabbath observance ceases in Judah because of the destruction of the Temple, suggesting that it was observed by some at least before this:

וַיִּחַמַּס כָּגֹן שָׂכֹו שְׁחַת מוֹעֲדוֹ שָׁכַח יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת וַיִּנְאַץ בְּזַעַם-אָפוֹ מִלֵּךְ וְכֹהֵן:

He has crushed his booth like a garden,  
Destroyed his appointed place;  
Yahweh has caused appointed time and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion;  
In the indignation of his anger he has despised king and priest. (Lam 2:6)

By contrast, in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, a lack of Sabbath observance is one of the sins that necessitates the punishment of the exile, rather than being a punishment in itself. Unlike Ezekiel, Jeremiah specifies exactly what it is the people of Judah do on the Sabbath which is forbidden: “carrying a burden” (*ns’ masśā’*; 17:21-22, 24) and “doing work” (*śh mēlā’kâ*; 17:22, 24). Presumable the eighth-century prophet Amos’ injunction against selling wheat on the Sabbath (not to mention using false scales whilst doing so)

---

<sup>616</sup> Rüdiger Schmitt claims that there is no evidence that the Sabbath was a family observance before the exile, and that these mentions of the Sabbath (as well as 2 Kgs 4:23) may reflect a feast held in the Temple on days with a full moon, i.e. the calendrical opposite of the New Moon. The seventh day of rest may have originated with practice of allowing humans and animals to rest from their agricultural work once a week to avoid exhaustion (Exod 23:12; 34:21) and eventually became combined with the full moon observance during the exile when the latter could not be celebrated in the Temple. Although the Sabbath can be observed in the home, Ezekiel 46:1,3 reveals that the prophet does not foresee a complete separation between this practice and the Temple in Israel’s idealized future (Schmitt, “Rites of Family and Household Religion,” 401).

would be included in this list (Amos 8:5). Trito-Isaiah takes a slightly different approach to the Sabbath, defining its observance as refraining from doing whatever one likes, including seeking pleasure and chit-chatting (Isa 58:13). Instead, members of the house of Israel are supposed to “honour” (Piel of *kbd*; Isa 58:13) and “sanctify” the Sabbath day (Piel of *qđš*; Jer 17:22, 24); the opposite of Ezekiel’s accusation that they “profane” it (Piel of *ḥll*; 20:13, 21; 22:8).

The importance of the Sabbath for exilic and post-exilic writers is evident. The prophet Jeremiah promises that Sabbath observance will ensure for eternity a king on the throne of David and inhabitants in Jerusalem and Judah (Jer 17:25-26). By contrast, failure to observe the Sabbath will result in Jerusalem being burned down (Jer 17:27). Trito-Isaiah also seems to hold the Sabbath as the single most important indicator of whether someone, even a non-Israelite, has “joined themselves to Yahweh,” as seen in Isa 56:4-7:

כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְסֹרִיסִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־שַׁבָּתוֹתַי וּבָחֲרוּ בְאֲשֶׁר חִפְצָתִי וּמַחְזִיקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִיתִי וּבְחֻמֹּתַי יָד וְשֵׁם טוֹב מִבָּנִים וּמִבָּנוֹת שֵׁם עוֹלָם אֶתֶּן־לּוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּרֵת: ס  
וּבְנֵי הַגֵּזֶר הַגְּלוּיִם עַל־יְהוָה לִשְׁרָתוֹ וְלֹא־הָבָה אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה לְהִיוֹת לוֹ לַעֲבָדִים כָּל־שֹׁמֵר שַׁבָּת מִחֻלּוֹ וּמַחְזִיקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: וְהָבִיאוּתִים אֶל־הַר קֹדֶשִׁי וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבֵית תַּפְלְתִּי עוֹלֵתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרִצּוֹן עַל־מִזְבְּחִי כִּי בֵיתִי בֵּית־תַּפְלָה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

For Yahweh says this: “To the officials who will keep my Sabbaths and choose what delights me and uphold my covenant, <sup>5</sup>I will give them a memorial and a name within my house and within my walls better than sons and daughters; I will give an eternal name to him who is not cut off. <sup>6</sup>As for the foreign sons who are joined to Yahweh to minister to him and to love Yahweh’s name, to be servants to him, all who keep from profaning the Sabbath and uphold my covenant - <sup>7</sup>I am bringing them to my holy mountain, and I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be favourable on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isa 56:4-7).

Ezekiel also portrays Sabbath observance as an important part of Yahwism in a restored Jerusalem, but does not indicate that it would be a means for foreigners to join the Judean community. In Ezekiel 44:24, he states that the restored priesthood will be responsible for overseeing Sabbath observance. This is a contrast to the situation in post-597 BCE Judah, when the “princes of Israel” are accused of ignoring this duty (22:8). In Ezekiel’s vision of the future, the prince (always in the singular) will not have a religious role, other than providing six lambs without blemish, a ram without blemish, grain, and oil for the Sabbath sacrifices (46:4-5). Every Sabbath, the people of Jerusalem will come to the opened gate of the inner court of the Temple which faces east and bow to Yahweh. In this way, Ezekiel envisages the Judeans receiving a weekly reminder about their place in the religious hierarchy. They are permitted only a glimpse into the inner court, meaning that they do not have the opportunity to fill it with abominations as they did before. Their bodies, in bowing, pay homage to Yahweh as he receives the offerings given on their behalf.

### *Feast Days*

A similar process occurs during the New Moons, appointed times, and festivals. In Ezekiel’s idealized future, the Zadokite priests are responsible for ensuring the observance of these days as well as the Sabbaths (44:24). The prince provides the sacrifices, including “burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings” (45:17). On the occasion of the New Moon, these offerings include a bull without blemish, six lambs, a ram, grain, and oil (46:6-7). As on the Sabbath, the people are to gather at the opened



east gate of the inner court of the Temple and bow to Yahweh (46:3), an additional monthly show of their loyalty.

For other “appointed times” (*mô ‘ădîm*), the people are permitted into the inner court as long as they walk through it in a straight north-to-south or south-to-north line (46:9). The offerings on these occasions are to be the same as the New Moons (46:11). All of this is in addition to the daily offerings the prince must provide for the Temple: a year-old lamb without blemish, 1/6 ephah of grain, and 1/3 hin of oil every morning (46:13-14). The prince is also permitted to provide a freewill offering, which can be either a burnt offering or a peace offering (46:12).

The Passover, traditionally a family meal, still involves seven days of eating unleavened bread in Ezekiel: a ritual that can be overseen in the home<sup>617</sup> and thus could have been upheld by the Judeans in Babylonia. Its mention in Ezekiel 45:21-25 is significant because of the feast’s function in reminding the Israelites of the Exodus, which for Ezekiel was the true origin of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh.<sup>618</sup> Mary Douglas recognised the importance of rituals like this for communal identity. She noted that ritual focuses the attention by framing a marked off time and place where cultural memory is enlivened and the present is linked to the past. Ranked and ordered populations play their appointed parts, giving meaning to their current existence and

---

<sup>617</sup> As presented in Exod 12-13. Schmitt, “Rites of Family and Household Religion,” 399-400.

<sup>618</sup> See Section 3.1. On the origins of the Passover tradition, Rüdiger Schmitt writes: “It is widely agreed that Exod 12:21-23 represents the most ancient preexilic core of the Passover ritual, later adopted by P in Exod 12:1-13 during the situation of exile.” He also notes that the apparently exilic innovation of limiting participation in the Passover celebration to those who were circumcised (Exod 12:43-50; Schmitt, “Rites of Family and Household Religion,” 399).

situation.<sup>619</sup> The food element of the festival is also significant for its function in collective identity. Bryan Turner writes: “Eating is the origin of community, where festivals are celebrations of belonging and membership through a sharing of food.”<sup>620</sup>

In Ezekiel’s idealized future, he envisions the observance of unleavened bread as accompanied by a sin offering of a young bull for the prince and the people of the land, as well as daily burnt offerings of seven bulls and seven rams (each with an ephah of grain and a hin of oil), and a male goat each day of the festival as a sin offering (45:22-24). Although the slaughtering of the Passover lamb had always been a communal event (Exod 12:6), Ezekiel and the Holiness Code (Lev 23:4-8) both promote its development into a centralized festival when the exile is over. Ezekiel’s involvement of the head of state in the Passover festivities is also reflected in Hezekiah and Josiah’s provision of animals for the Passover sacrifices in 2 Chron 30:24 and 35:1-19.<sup>621</sup>

The same sacrifices are to be repeated once more during the year: on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and for seven days following this (45:25). This festival is not identified by Ezekiel, but may reflect either of the autumnal festivals described in the Pentateuch: either the Feast of Booths (Lev 23:39-44; Deut 16:13, 16) or the Feast of Ingathering (Exod 23:16; 34:22). Having only one autumnal festival exactly six months

---

<sup>619</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 64-65, 72. Emile Durkheim had already noted the significance of rituals for creating and controlling a community’s experience, but Douglas showed that the effect of his work was to make ritual synonymous with religion, rather than recognizing its presence in everyday life, especially in societies for whom nearly all experience is religious.

<sup>620</sup> Turner, *The Body and Society*, xiii.

<sup>621</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 665. The Chronicler has Levites doing the slaughtering (cf. Ezra 6:19-22) while priests pour the blood on the altar (2 Chron 35:11), emphasizing the centralized and sacred nature of the festival. This tradition is also reflected in *Jubilees* 49 (Schmitt, “Rites of Family and Household Religion,” 400).

after the celebration of Passover split the cultic calendar very neatly into two halves, each beginning with a pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>622</sup> Jonathan Ben-Dov suggested that Ezekiel was influenced by the structure of the Mesopotamian year, which was also split into two halves with festivals in the first month of each (Tishri and Nissan).<sup>623</sup> This calendrical structure ensured that every Judean had to visit the Temple and physically renew their loyalty to Yahweh at least twice a year and persisted in post-biblical calendars such as the Temple Scroll from Qumran.<sup>624</sup>

Ezekiel does not indicate that these festival observances were neglected before or during his exile to Babylonia. Yet in his view, since the Temple was full of abominations (*tô 'ēbôt*; Ezek 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17), any attempt to conduct the rituals there would be fruitless. Jeremiah may be suggesting that the Yahwistic festivals were not observed during the period of his ministry when he says,

They do not say in their hearts,  
Let us fear Yahweh, our God  
Who gives rain and early rain and late rain in their times;  
He keeps for us the appointed weeks of harvest. (Jer 5:24)

Jeremiah's claim that the Judeans have forgotten that it is Yahweh who is in control of the times and seasons may suggest that the festivals which acknowledge and celebrate this fact were not being observed. Ezekiel's idealized cultic calendar is designed to ensure that this will not be the case for his community.

---

<sup>622</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 666-67.

<sup>623</sup> Jonathan Ben-Dov, J. 2014. "Time and Culture: Mesopotamian Calendars in Jewish Sources from the Bible to the Mishnah." pp. 217–254 in U. Gabbay and S. Secunda, eds. *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

### *Personal Names*

The importance of Sabbath and festival observance to the diaspora community is evidenced in the popularity of personal names that evoke these practices, such as Šabbātay and Ḥaggay. The name “Šabbātay” is not attested before the exile, but is evident among Judean communities in the late sixth and fifth centuries BCE: there is at least one “Shabbethai the Levite” mentioned in Ezra 10:15 and Nehemiah 8:6; 11:16 and a Šabbatāia son of Banā-Yāma (a Yahwistic name) is attested in CUSAS 28, 42.<sup>625</sup> There are three individuals named Ḥaggâ/ Ḥaggai attested in the CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6 corpora, at least one of whom has a clear Yahwistic heritage.<sup>626</sup> The names Šabbātay and Ḥaggay are also relatively popular in the Murašû archive.<sup>627</sup>

Whilst some have seen this as evidence of the increased importance of Sabbath and feast observances as Judean identity markers,<sup>628</sup> others advise caution in drawing sociological or theological conclusions from onomastica.<sup>629</sup> Personal names can only convey limited information about the beliefs and practices of a community. For example, Zadok points out that the name Šabbātay may reflect the same pattern as the well-attested Akkadian name Sabāyu, which probably denoted a person born on the seventh day of the week. Thus, it may reflect Babylonian influence on the diaspora community.

---

<sup>625</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles*, 165-66; 291.

<sup>626</sup> Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles*, 271.

<sup>627</sup> Zadok, *The Jews in Babylonia*, 23. In the Murašû archive, it is possible to prove that those named Šabbātay have a Yahwistic lineage, but the same cannot be said of those named Ḥaggay. The latter is the Aramaicised version of the Hebrew name Ḥaggî, which was popular among Judeans before the forced migrations to Babylonia.

<sup>628</sup> The first to suggest this was Samuel Daiches (*The Jews in Babylonia in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah According to the Babylonian Inscriptions* [London: Jews' College Publications, 1910], 35.

<sup>629</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 36-37.

However, this does not mean that the Judeans attributed the same significance to the seventh day that Babylonians did. Names are a part of the social interactions which constantly reinforce individuals' social identities,<sup>630</sup> so their meaning can only be understood within their broader social context. It is evident from sources like Ezekiel and Nehemiah that at least some diaspora representatives considered the observation of Sabbaths and feast days important identity markers for Judeans. Those who did not observe this cultic calendar were depicted as outsiders. This is nowhere more evident than Nehemiah 13:15-22, when Nehemiah physically shuts the gates of Jerusalem to exclude anyone wishing to do business on the Sabbath. Ezekiel's ideology had become the one with the greatest force behind it.

### **3.3 Class Identity**

The majority of Ezekiel's vitriol concerning the remnant is targeted at the leadership in Jerusalem. As already discussed, Ezekiel does not recognize Zedekiah as the new king and he does not accept that the new or remaining leadership of Judah is fit for their role. A large part of this animosity can probably be attributed to his concern for events taking place in Jerusalem and frustration at being unable to influence them as before. Ezekiel and his cohort continued to identify themselves as the leaders of society, and they believed that upon their inevitable return to Judah they had a claim to the land (see 3.1) as well as their previous leadership roles. Just as Ezekiel undermined the remnant's entitlement to the land by demonstrating their similarity to Canaanites, he undermined their ability to hold leadership positions in Judah by describing their complete religious

---

<sup>630</sup> Jane Pilcher, "Names, Bodies, and Identities," *Sociology* 50/4 (2016), 764-79 (774).

and moral corruption. It is not that Ezekiel saw the Judean leaders in Babylonia as exempt from any wrongdoing (see Ezek 14:3-5), but rather that their misdeeds could be dealt with by Yahweh, since they do not represent such a complete abuse of authority as those in Jerusalem.

Many of the ritual failures discussed above (Section 3.2) are particularly ascribed to community leaders in Jerusalem, including elders (*zēqēnîm*) and officials (*šārîm*). The fact that these lay leaders involved themselves in religious activity properly reserved for the Zadokite priesthood, in Ezekiel's view, is in itself cause for reproach. Yet the majority of misdeeds attributed to the upper class fall into the category of social injustice. The leaders in Jerusalem (including the prince [*nāšî'*], prophets [*nēbî'im*], priests [*kōhănîm*], and officials [*šārîm*]) are accused of using their positions of power to exploit the defenceless in society: the poor, needy, widowed, orphaned, and foreign. In so doing, they neglect to uphold the ideals of justice and righteousness (*mišpāṭ ūšēdāqā*) which ancient Near Eastern and biblical traditions dictate rulers should have.

### 3.3.1 Religious Misconduct

Scholars often assume that the ritual malpractices described in Ezekiel 8 are directed at the post-597 BCE priesthood in Jerusalem.<sup>631</sup> Undoubtedly, Ezekiel would have considered the priesthood at fault for permitting such unacceptable things to take place in the Temple, and he had no positive comments about his contemporary religious leaders in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 22:26). However, Ezekiel 8 does not mention priests among the people who are conducting the illicit ritual activities.

---

<sup>631</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 68.

One activity in particular – the worship of the sun – takes place “between the porch and the altar” of the Temple where priests should stand to conduct intercession according to Joel 2:17.

וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי אֶל־חֲצַר בֵּית־יְהוָה הַפְּנִימִית וְהַנֶּהֱפֹתָח הַיָּכָל יְהוָה בֵּין הָאוֹלָם וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כְּעֹשְׂרִים וְחַמֶּשֶׁה אִישׁ  
אֲחֵרֵיהֶם אֶל־הַיָּכָל יְהוָה וּפְנֵיהֶם קִדְמָה וְהִמָּה מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיָּתָם קִדְמָה לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:

He brought me to the inner court of the House of Yahweh, and at the opening of the Temple of Yahweh between the porch and the altar were about 25 men; their backs were to the Temple of Yahweh and their faces were eastward, and they were bowing down eastward to the Sun. (Ezek 8:16)

Yet there are several reasons to believe that these men are lay leaders and not priests.

In Ezekiel 9:6-7, Yahweh orders the destruction of Jerusalem based on these disgusting practices, beginning with the sanctuary (both the “house” [*bayit*] and the “courts” [*hăṣṣērôt*]; 9:7). As a result, his executioners start with “the elders who were before the house” (*hazzēqēnîm āšer lipnê habbāyit*; 9:6); there is no mention of any priests being present in or around the Temple.<sup>632</sup> Ezekiel 8:11-12, which condemns the presence of images and *miqteret* incense burners in the Temple court, attributes this activity to the “seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel” (*šib ’îm ’iš mizziqnê bêt-yiśrā’ēl*). The number seventy indicates wholeness in the Hebrew Bible: it could be that Ezekiel is suggesting that all of the elders in post-597 BCE Jerusalem are guilty of non-exclusive Yahwistic practices, though only a subset (“about 25”) may have been involved in sun-worship. The lay leadership’s usurpation of religious roles in the Temple, going as far as Yahweh’s altar (8:16), not to mention bringing non-Yahwistic practices into this sacred environment, is the reason why they are the first of the Jerusalemites to be killed (9:6).

---

<sup>632</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 70.

Furthermore, in Ezekiel 11:1, the prophet has another vision of 25 men at the entrance of the east gate of the house of Yahweh. No ritual activity is mentioned, but the men are described as “officials of the people” (*śārê hā ‘am*). They are said to abuse their power by “giving evil counsel in the city” (*yō ‘ăšîm ‘aṣat rā ‘ bā ‘ir*; 11:2) which could include leading its inhabitants in non-Yahwistic worship. Again, the presence of non-priestly elites at the Temple suggests that they are exerting undue influence in this formerly sacred sphere.

By naming several of the men involved in the activities of Chapters 8-11, Ezekiel locates this activity firmly among the leadership of post-597 BCE Jerusalem. If Jaazaniah son of Shaphan (8:11) was the son of the same Shaphan who was state secretary under Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3-14), his activities present a significant departure from the rest of his family, who supported Josiah’s reforms and Jeremiah’s prophecies (Jer 26:24; 29:3; 36:10-12; 39:14).<sup>633</sup> This family seems to have formed a core element of the post-597 BCE leadership of Judah as well as the post-587 BCE leadership: Jaazaniah’s nephew was Gedaliah, the governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 39:14; 40:5-11; 41:2; 43:6). Although Ezekiel condemns Zedekiah for not being faithful to his treaty with Babylon (Ezek 17:12-19), he does not hold a particularly pro-Babylonian stance overall.<sup>634</sup> Seeing his own cohort replaced by those willing to cooperate with the Babylonian oppressors would have been a cause for consternation. Ezekiel’s claim that this new leadership conducted foreign ritual practices such as carving images on the Temple walls and worshipping the sun (see Section 3.2.1) was a natural progression from

---

<sup>633</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, PN.

<sup>634</sup> See Sections 2.1 and 2.2



his concern about their pro-Babylonian stance. Ezekiel's audience of ex-Jerusalemite elites would have latched onto these accusations to assure themselves that the new leadership was inferior.

The mention of the two men called Jaazaniah is particularly poignant because the name means "Yahweh has heard." Jaazaniah son of Shaphan and his cohort justify their illicit ritual practices by saying "Yahweh does not see us" (*'ên Yhwh rō'ēh 'ōtānû*; 8:12). The irony is evident: Yahweh does see what they are doing and it causes him to remove himself from the Temple. When the people of Jerusalem cry out for his help, including Jaazaniah, he will not hear them.

It is significant that Ezekiel's vision in Chapters 8-11 occurs while the "elders of Judah" (*zīqnê yěhûdâ*; 8:1) are sitting before the prophet in his house in Babylonia. The setting suggests the vision was for the benefit of these men in particular, as the leaders of the Judean forced migrant community. Ezekiel cautions them against acting like their counterparts in Jerusalem. In 14:3 he accuses the elders in Babylonia of having "raised idols into their hearts" (*he 'ēlû gillûlēhem 'al libbām*) and "set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces" (*mikšôl 'ăwônām nātēnû nōkah pēnēhem*). Whether the "stumbling block of their iniquity" refers to the idols is uncertain, though no other offense is mentioned either in verse 3 or when the charge is repeated in 14:4 and 14:7. Ezekiel 44:12 accuses the Levites of being a stumbling block to the house of Israel explicitly because of their idol-worship:

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתּוּ אוֹתָם לִפְנֵי גִלּוּלֵיהֶם וְהָיוּ לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַכְשׁוֹל עָוֹן עַל־כֵּן נִשְׁאַתִּי יָדִי עֲלֵיהֶם נֹאֵם אֱלֹדִנִּי יְהוָה  
וְנִשְׁאַוּ עֲוֹנָם:

Because they ministered before their idols and were a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn to them, the declaration of the Lord Yahweh, and they will bear their guilt (Ezek 44:12).

However, Ezekiel 7:19-20 provides some added nuance to the situation. Here it is said that silver and gold were the “stumbling block of their iniquity” (*mikšôl ‘ăwônām*; 7:19), referring to the wealthy inhabitants of Judah. Verse 20 turns the accusation back to idol worship: the accused are said to have made “their abominable images” (*šalmê tô ‘ăbôtām*) and “their disgusting things” (*šiqqûšêhem*) out of what was once “his beautiful ornament” (*šēbî ‘ădyô*). The identity of that ornament or who it belonged to is unclear. It is likely Ezekiel had the Jerusalem Temple in mind, given the accusations in Ezekiel 16:16-19 concerning Temple gifts being used in idol worship.<sup>635</sup> This would mean that Ezekiel accuses the Jerusalem elites of taking from the Temple in order to create or honour idols. In all of the places where a stumbling block is mentioned in Ezekiel, it is experienced or created by those in leadership positions, both in the remnant community and among the forced migrants in Babylonia.

In contrast to the leaders in Jerusalem, whose actions cause the destruction of the entire Temple and city, the elders in Babylonia are dealt with on an individual basis. In 14:8, Yahweh says, “I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword, and cut him off from the midst of the people” (*wěnātattî pānay bā’îš hahû’ wahašimōtîhû lē’ôt wělimšālîm wēhikrattîw mittôk ‘ammî*). The guilt is limited to the individual, rather than affecting the entire population.

---

<sup>635</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 486; Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 95-96.

In the exilic community's salvation history of Ezekiel 20, Ezekiel shows that it is only Yahweh's decision to spare the Israelites that prevents their destruction. He takes the same view as the Holiness Code: that there is no threat of Yahweh ever permanently revoking his covenant with (the "true") Israel, no matter how reprehensible their actions.<sup>636</sup> Since, in Ezekiel's view, the forced migrant community is the element of Israel that will continue in this cycle of events, their elders' actions cannot prevent Yahweh's forgiveness and restoration of the community. The individual who chooses idol-worship can easily be excised from the chosen community. Likewise, in the second half of Ezekiel 14 (verses 12-23), Yahweh says that even if the three most righteous men – Noah, Daniel, and Job – were in Jerusalem, they alone would be saved while the rest of the city perished. This shows that the fates of the two groups have been sealed, and the actions of their leaders can no longer change them.<sup>637</sup>

### **3.3.2 Social Misconduct**

In addition to religious wrongdoing, Ezekiel accuses the leaders in Jerusalem of abusing their power by failing to enact social justice. By contrast, it is unlikely that the first generation of Judean forced migrants to Babylonia would have developed a sufficiently hierarchical society that there was rampant social injustice taking place among them. Nearly all members of that community were united by their status as

---

<sup>636</sup> Cook, "Ezekiel's Recovery," 363 (based on Lev 26:40-45).

<sup>637</sup> Ezekiel 18 provides a theodicy explaining why decision of Yahweh is fair: everyone gets the punishment they deserve, and one person's righteousness cannot save anyone else. Ezekiel 43:7-9 states that once Jerusalem has been destroyed and restored, Yahweh will "dwell in their midst forever." This can only be undertaken once the house of Israel and their kings have ceased their defiling and promiscuous practices, and the dead bodies of the kings have been removed from the city (cf. Jer 8:1-3). For Ezekiel, Yahweh's absence from his holy city is inextricably linked to the physical presence of its earthly rulers, who defile (*tm'*) it both alive and dead.

Jerusalem elites who had become forced labourers in the Neo-Babylonian empire. This experience may have influenced Ezekiel to observe the oppression taking place in Judah with a new sense of empathy for the downtrodden. The wrongdoing he attributes to the leaders of Judah fall into three categories: violence amounting to murder; dishonest gain of material goods; and neglecting their duty of care to the more vulnerable members of society. Such behaviour defiles (*tm*) the land of Judah as does unsanctioned ritual activity (Ezek 22:3-5, 10-11). It is the opposite of what defines a “righteous” person, a quality expected of those who held leadership positions.

Ezekiel frequently claims that the leaders of Judah commit violent actions. In Ezekiel 11:6, which is part of a prophecy against the “officials of the people” (*šārê hā`ām*; 11:1), they are said to have “increased your slain in this city” (*hirbêtem ḥalēlēkem bā`îr hazzō`t*). Contrary to the officials’ belief that they are the choice “meat” in the “pot” of the city, Ezekiel designates the slain as the “meat,” whilst the officials will be brought out to face sword, foreigners, and judgement (11:7-11).

The officials are not the only leadership group Ezekiel accuses of violent behaviour: the “princes of Israel” (*nešî`ê yiśrā`ēl*) are blamed for the shedding of blood (*šēpāk-dām*) in Jerusalem (Ezek 22:6). In an even more graphic description, the prophets (*nebi`îm*) are said to have “consumed lives” (*nepeš ākēlû*) like a lion tearing its prey (22:25). Average Judeans seem to be involved in this activity as well, though possibly indirectly; some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem are called “men of slander” (*anšê rākîl*; 22:9), whilst others “take bribes” (*šōḥar lāqēḥû*; 22:12) both of which cause the shedding of blood, though the link between the activities is not explained (22:9, 12). These actions seem to be indicative of individuals caught up in a general milieu of violence and using it for their

own gain.<sup>638</sup> Violence and bloodshed are both listed as actions not befitting a “righteous” man (Ezek 18:10), with the result that if someone is violent (*pārīš*) or a “shedder of blood” (*šōpēk dām*), he can expect to be punished with death (18:14; cf. Ezek 45:9).

Additionally, Ezekiel frequently condemns the practices of extortion and other means of dishonest gain. Extortion necessarily involves a power dynamic whereby the one able to enact it must be in a superior position (whether political, financial, or otherwise) relative to the one they are abusing. The prophets in Judah are a target of Ezekiel’s criticism in Chapter 22, having corrupted their positions as the perceived messengers of God.<sup>639</sup> They are said to have “taken treasure and precious things” (*hōsen wīqār yiqqāhū*; 22:25). Whether this robbery targeted the people whom the prophets allegedly killed (22:25), or whether it comes from another source is unclear. The possibility of a second source of illicit income is suggested by 22:28, which states that the prophets are “seeing falsehood and divining lies” (*hōzīm šāwē’ wēqōsēmīm lāhem kāzāb*) for the princes in Jerusalem, presumably in exchange for some kind of personal benefit.

In terms of more explicit extortion, the entire city of Jerusalem is accused of taking interest and profit (*nešek wētarbīt lāqaḥat*) and making dishonest gain from her neighbours via extortion (*tēbaššē’ ī rē’ayik ba’ōšeq*; 22:12).<sup>640</sup> In 22:29 the “people of the land” (*‘am hā’āreš*) are said to have conducted extortion and robbery (*‘āšēqū ‘ōšeq wēgāzēlū gāzēl*), two of the activities precluded from being righteous. According to

---

<sup>638</sup> See for comparison Jer 2:34a, addressed to the entire generation: “Even on your skirts, the lifeblood of the innocent needy is found.”

<sup>639</sup> Cf. Jer 23:14. and Section 4.3.2

<sup>640</sup> Cf. Jer 6:13; 8:10; 17:11.

Ezekiel 18:7-8, a righteous man “does not conduct oppression, returns his pledge of debt, does not commit robbery... does not give with interest nor take profit” (*lō' yōneh ḥābōlātō ḥōb yāšīb gēzēlā lō' yigzōl... bannešek lō' yittēn wētarbīt lō' yiqqāḥ*); and as a result, will be rewarded with life (18:9).

Biblical tradition dictates that extorting the vulnerable in society is the opposite of how a person in a leadership position should use their power. It involves the neglect of those members of society who merit protection, such as the resident alien (*gēr*; Ezek 22:7, 29), the orphan (*yātôm*; 22:7), the widow (*'almānā*; 22:7), the poor (*'onī*; 22:29), and the needy (*'ebyôn*; 22:29).<sup>641</sup> Even the parents of these oppressors cannot expect to receive the support they are entitled to (22:7). By contrast, Ezekiel 18:7 describes the righteous man as one who “gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment” (*laḥmō lērā'ēb yittēn wē'ērōm yēkasseh bāged*). Such a concern for the needy in society, combined with the ability to make fair judgements, are the qualities that are most desired in a leader both in the book of Ezekiel and the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

### 3.3.3 Justice, Righteousness, and Leadership

For Ezekiel, the concept of a man who embodies “justice and righteousness” (*mišpāt ūšēdāqā*; Ezek 18:5) also includes someone who follows Yahweh’s laws (18:9) and preserves his own purity in the sense of refraining from idol worship and illicit sexual activity (18:6). Ezekiel expected such behaviour to be conducted by anyone who claimed to uphold the covenant with Yahweh as a member of his people. Yet the stipulations involving power relationships, especially economic ones (such as refraining from

---

<sup>641</sup> Cf. Jer 7:5-7.

extortion and helping the poor), suggest that Ezekiel 18 was written with the upper class in mind.

This conclusion is further supported by the use of the concept of “justice and righteousness” elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. These qualities are often ascribed to an idealized king or ruler. For example, Jeremiah 5:4-5 claims that the poor cannot be expected to know Yahweh’s ways or his justice, whereas the “great ones” (*haggēdōlīm*) are held accountable for their intentional rebellion against these precepts. Likewise, the king “on the throne of David” is instructed to “do justice and righteousness” in Jeremiah 22:3 (cf. 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Chron 18:14; Isa 9:6; 16:5; Jer 33:15). This involves delivering people from their oppressors and protecting the resident alien, the orphan, the widow, and the innocent. If he does this, Davidic kingship will be preserved (Jer 22:4)

This tradition dates back to the earliest period of ancient Near Eastern rulers. The king was portrayed as a “good shepherd” who protected the vulnerable in society from being abused.<sup>642</sup> This theme is evident in Ezekiel 34, the prophecy against the “shepherds of Israel” who have not looked after their sheep:

בְּנֵאֲדָם הַנֶּבֶא עַל־רֹעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנֶּבֶא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם לְרָעִים כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הוֹי רֹעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ  
רָעִים אוֹתָם הָלוֹא הֵצֵאן יָרְעוּ הָרָעִים: אֶת־הַחֶלֶב תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶת־הַחֶמֶךְ תִּלְכְּשׁוּ הַבְּרִיאָה תִּנְבְּחוּ הֵצֵאן לֹא תִרְעוּ:  
אֶת־הַנִּחְלָוֹת לֹא תִנְקֶמֶם וְאֶת־הַחֹלָה לֹא־תִרְפְּאוּם וְלִנְשָׁבֶרֶת לֹא תִבְשְׁמֶם וְאֶת־הַנִּגְדָּה לֹא תִשְׁבְּתֶם וְאֶת־הָאֲבֹת  
לֹא תִבְשְׁמוּם וּבְחֹקָה רְדִיתֶם אֹתָם וּבְכָרְדָּה:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them, to the shepherds, “Thus said Lord Yahweh: ‘Ah, shepherds of Israel, who were

<sup>642</sup> The legal codes compiled by kings such as Ur-Nammu, king of Ur (ca. 2100 BCE), Lipit-Ishtar, ruler of Isin (ca. 1870 BCE), and, most famously, Hammurabi of Babylon (ca. 1750 BCE) claimed to eliminate corruption from their cities and protect the vulnerable (including orphans, widows, and the poor). Hammurabi explicitly referred to himself as a shepherd of his people. Additionally, certain prophecies involving Marduk claim that if the god ever leaves his post in Babylon, chaos will ensue in the city, which includes the rich oppressing the poor (Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 105). This suggests that the abuse of privilege was considered a disruption of the correct world order in Babylonian tradition.

pasturing themselves. Should not the shepherds pasture the sheep? <sup>3</sup>You eat the fat, wear the wool, and slaughter the fat ones. You do not pasture the sheep! You do not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind the injured, return the strayed, or seek the perished. You have ruled them with strength and harshness.” (Ezek 34:2-4)

As a result, Yahweh says he is “against the shepherds” (34:10) and will act as the shepherd himself, seeking them out and feeding them (34:11-15).<sup>643</sup> Not only that, but he is also against the fat sheep of the flock who tread on the food of the rest (34:18-20). In place of multiple shepherds and fat sheep, there will be one Davidic ruler (*nāśî'*) caring for all equally (34:24).

Stephen Cook suggests that the reason Ezekiel chooses the term *nāśî'* in place of the more traditional one for the king, *melek*, is because of the association of the *nāśî'* with the pre-monarchic period of tribal leaders.<sup>644</sup> Unlike a king, a *nāśî'* did not preside over the state cult or Temple, did not have a bureaucracy or court, and could not evict Israelites from their ancestral farms to take more land for the crown. This sounds similar to the leadership Ezekiel envisages for the *nāśî'* in his vision of the future in Chapters 45-46.<sup>645</sup> Additionally, the lack of a king is in keeping with the Holiness Code’s view that Yahweh’s direct presence with Israel makes them his servants and not the king’s (e.g. Lev 25:23, 55; 26:11-12). Therefore, Ezekiel, influenced by this structure, attributes

---

<sup>643</sup> Cf. Jer 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 23:1-6; 25:34-37; 31:10; 50:6-8, 17-19.

<sup>644</sup> Cook, “Ezekiel’s Recovery,” 367.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 362. Although the *nāśî'* is still expected to provide for the cult, as outlined in Section 3.2.3. Also, Ezek 45:9 contradicts Cook’s conclusion as the princes of Israel (*nēśî'ê yiśrā'el*) are able to evict (*grš*) people.



monarchic prerogatives such as releasing slavery and debt during the Jubilee Year to the population of Israel as a whole in his vision of the return.<sup>646</sup>

Whilst it is clear that Ezekiel wishes to limit the power the Israelite and Judahite kings have yielded in the past, it is less certain that he intended for the *nāśî'* to be something inherently different from a *melek*. Ezekiel refers to Zedekiah, the king he criticizes, as a *nāśî'* in 12:12, suggesting that he considers the term is appropriate for the current rulership as well as the future one. Jon Levenson notes that there are several other instances in the Hebrew Bible where the term *nāśî'* refers to the Davidic king. Most notably, in 1 Kings 11:34 it specifically refers to the Davidic ruler of Judah in contrast to the non-Davidic ruler of Israel.<sup>647</sup> Therefore, Ezekiel's use of *nāśî'* does not indicate that he wishes to do away with the institution of kingship. By contrast, Levinson notes that the metaphor of the shepherds in Ezekiel 34 evokes the popular ancient Near Eastern metaphor for kingship.

For Ezekiel, Yahweh is the supreme king; the earthly king is only there with his authorisation. If that king pursues his own gain at the expense of his people, Yahweh will remove him. Levenson compares the situation to Nebuchadnezzar and his puppet king Zedekiah in Ezekiel 17. In both Chapter 17 and 34, Ezekiel's issue is not with kingship in and of itself, but with past Davidic kings (and the present one, Zedekiah) who have

---

<sup>646</sup> Cook, "Ezekiel's Recovery," 365. Cf. Yahweh's command for everyone to release their slaves on the Sabbath year in Jer 34:8-17.

<sup>647</sup> Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, HSM 10 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 63-65. Levenson adds that sometimes the term *nāśî'* is used in synonymous parallelism with *melek*, and that the LXX oscillates between translating *melek* as *basileus*, *archōn*, and *hēgoumenos*, even when a king is clearly meant (e.g. Deut 17:14), the latter two of which are also used for *nāśî'*.

misunderstood the nature of their position as a vassal.<sup>648</sup> In the process of restoring a good leadership for Israel, Yahweh asserts his role as the chief shepherd of his people and will appoint a suitable earthly shepherd in the idealized future, whom Levenson interprets as a messianic figure. That this idealized future is intended for the forced migrant group and not those who remain in Judah is suggested by Ezekiel's use of Exodus imagery in 34:13-15, where Yahweh promises to bring his flock out from the peoples and settle them on the mountains of Israel.<sup>649</sup>

The use of shepherd imagery, in addition to evoking the concept of a king's pastoral care for his people, foregrounds David's humble origins rather than the dynasty which succeeded him.<sup>650</sup> Based on these insights, it appears that what Ezekiel envisions for the future is not so much a Davidic ruler as a second David. According to the tradition that informed the Deuteronomistic History, David was chosen directly by Yahweh, and Yahweh's covenant with him included rulership of both Israel and Judah (2 Sam 7:8-16). This is the situation Ezekiel envisages in 37:15-28, where his idealised ruler is called David, a *melek* (37:24) and a *nāšî'* (37:25), who governs a united Judah and Israel (37:22). However, all of this can only take place once the final judgement on Judah has

---

<sup>648</sup> This analogy provides valuable insight into Ezekiel's view of kingship, but it can only go so far. For example, Ezekiel never accuses Zedekiah directly of acting for his personal gain or abusing his people, but rather of disloyalty to the covenant he made with Babylon (Ezek 17:7-10). Even from his stance of criticism towards Zedekiah, Ezekiel likely comprehended that the king acted (however ill-advisedly) to remove Judah from whichever vassalage situation was deemed most onerous or risky at the time.

<sup>649</sup> Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, 86-88. Zimmerli was first to point out the use of Exodus imagery in Ezekiel 34: Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 839. The mention of the mountains of Israel is also significant to Levenson's argument about the messianic nature of the *nāšî'*. He understands Ezekiel as subjugating the inviolability of Zion tradition, along with its problematic history of Judean kingship, to the Sinai tradition in the Priestly writings where Israel enters into covenant with Yahweh. This means that the king is subject to Yahweh's laws as well as the conditions that if he does not follow them, he no longer has any right to power (Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, 95).

<sup>650</sup> Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, 87.

come to pass; a judgement which will have radically different results for the Jehoiachin exiles and for those who remain in Judah.

### **3.4 Judgement and Restoration**

Perhaps the most striking difference between the remnant and the Jehoiachin exiles as presented in the book of Ezekiel is the future that each group can expect. The bodies of the individual members of those communities are the locations on which their fate will be enacted. Those remaining in Judah will undergo various physical torments as part of their judgement, including starvation, thirst, forced cannibalism, trauma, and eventual death. There are occasional hints that anyone remaining in Judah who is worthy of salvation might be spared this punishment, which suggests that Ezekiel and his community may have eventually accepted those who were exiled to Babylonia in 587 BCE or who came even later.

The community of forced migrants can also expect to undergo judgement, but instead of resulting in their bodily destruction, this judgement will provide physical renewal: they will have “a new heart” (18:31), “a heart of flesh” (11:19, 36:26), and “a new spirit” (11:19; 18:31; 36:27), united in their devotion to Yahweh.<sup>651</sup> Again, there may be exceptions: Ezekiel 20:38 states that any “rebels” remaining in the community will be brought out of exile, but will not be permitted to enter the land of Israel, intentionally evoking the wilderness period of the Exodus when Moses’ generation was

---

<sup>651</sup> The passage in Ezekiel 18 is not explicitly addressed to the community in Babylonia, but rather to the whole “house of Israel” (18:29). However, it concerns individual responsibility and judgement, revealing that Ezekiel believes Yahweh will judge everyone appropriately. Since, for Ezekiel, the exile and destruction of Jerusalem are punishments from Yahweh (one with the possibility of a future redemption), it follows that he believes Judeans will undergo the punishment which corresponds to their sinfulness.

forbidden from entering the land. However, the majority of the exiled community can expect to experience a revitalisation, both of their human bodies and of the land of Israel, whose fruitfulness will be restored.

Before any discussion of the future occurs, it should be noted that the present bodies of the entire “house of Israel” are described in the same way. In Ezekiel’s first vision, Yahweh calls Israel a “house of rebellion” (*bêt mēřî*; 3:9) with “a strong forehead and a hard heart” (*ħizqê mēzaḥ ûqēšê lēb*; 3:7).<sup>652</sup> Later, in Chapter 12, they are said to have “eyes to see, but see not; ears to hear, but hear not” (*‘ēnayim lāhem lir’ôt wēlō’ rā’û ‘oznayim lāhem lišma’ wēlō’ šāmē’û*; 12:2). As a result of his audience’s intransigence, the prophet Ezekiel must be physically prepared for his task by being given an even stronger face and forehead (Ezek 3:8). Having thus equipped his prophet, Yahweh can begin to act upon the “hearts of stone” in Ezekiel’s community. One method of doing so is to present them with the alternative situation: the judgement that will be experienced by those in Jerusalem.

### 3.4.1 Bodily Destruction

Ezekiel predicts that the vast majority of the devastation involved in Yahweh’s judgement will fall upon those still living in Judah, and especially in Jerusalem, after the 597 BCE forced migration. This is due to all the factors presented above: their exclusion from the house of Israel based on their dubious ethnic origins, their improper ritual practices, and (particularly aimed at the upper class) their abuse of positions of power.

---

<sup>652</sup> Cf. Jer 5:3 “Their faces are stronger than rock; they refuse to repent;” and 17:23 “They did not listen or stretch out their ears, but hardened their necks lest they hear and take instruction.”

The devastation occurs in two stages: the first reflects the period of siege, and the second involves mass death, with the occasional caveat that some may be spared.

Ezekiel's descriptions of the period of siege in Jerusalem are particularly graphic, possibly because he experienced something similar first-hand when Nebuchadnezzar marched on the city in 597 BCE. It seems that on that occasion, Jehoiachin submitted to Babylonian vassalage fairly quickly, avoiding the worst for Jerusalem. Yet the siege still lasted about three months according to the Babylonian Chronicle, from *Kislev* (November-December) 598 BCE until *Adar* (February-April) 597 BCE.<sup>653</sup> As discussed above (Section 2.2.3), siege warfare loomed large in Ezekiel's imagination. Even before the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, the Judeans doubtless heard tales of the devastating effects of sieges from neighbouring states, from the communal memory of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem some hundred years before, and from Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian propaganda. Ezekiel mobilizes this communal memory against those remaining in Jerusalem, threatening that their worst-case scenario will become a reality.

One of the aspects of siege warfare that Ezekiel particularly focuses on is the experience of starvation and thirst caused by the limited supply of food and water within the city. 2 Kings 25:1-3 and Jeremiah 39:1-2 both record that the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem from 588 until 587 BCE lasted eighteen months, so this was likely a very real problem for the residents of the city.<sup>654</sup> In Ezekiel 4:16, Yahweh promises to "break the staff of bread in Jerusalem" which will result in its inhabitants eating bread "by weight and with anxiety" and drinking water "by measure and in dismay." Similarly, in 12:19 it

---

<sup>653</sup> Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 102.

<sup>654</sup> Cf. Jer 52:6.

is predicted that the residents of Jerusalem will “eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay.” This is in stark contrast to what Jerusalem experienced when it was still faithful to Yahweh. Ezekiel 16:13 describes the luxurious foods that were lavished on the city at that time: fine flour (*sōlet*), honey (*děbaš*), and oil (*šemen*; also 23:41), but she chose to devote them to “images of men” (*šalmê zākār*; 16:17).<sup>655</sup> According to Ezekiel, this misuse of food that should have been dedicated to Yahweh is part of what causes Jerusalem’s destruction, and it is food her inhabitants will desperately lack during their time of siege. Ezekiel describes the situation as becoming so desperate that the people will defile themselves through what they will eat: in 5:10 he envisions that “fathers will eat sons in your midst, and sons will eat their fathers” (‘*ābôt yō ’kēlû bānîm bêtōkak ūbānîm yō ’kēlû ’ābôtām*).<sup>656</sup>

During this period, the inhabitants of Jerusalem will experience further debilitating physical effects. Ezekiel describes how they will experience “anxiety” and “trembling” (12:19); their “hearts will melt” (21:12, 20 Heb), their “knees turn to water” (21:12 Heb), and they will “stumble” (21:20 Heb). He goes into particular detail imagining the downfall of the upper class, describing people throwing their gold and silver into the street because it will not “satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs” (7:19). These wealthy residents of Jerusalem will express their fear through feeble hands (also 21:12, Heb.), watery knees, and shameful faces (7:17-18).<sup>657</sup> They will be dressed in mourning,

---

<sup>655</sup> Who represent the Neo-Assyrian rulers, according to Margaret Odell (Odell, “Fragments of Traumatic Memory,” 114-16).

<sup>656</sup> Cf. Jer 19:9; 2 Kgs 6:24-31

<sup>657</sup> Cf. Jer 4:9

presumably having already experienced the deaths of friends and family, donning sackcloth (and horror) and bald heads (7:18).<sup>658</sup> Even the king himself will be in mourning and the prince “wrapped in despair” instead of their usual finery (7:27).<sup>659</sup> Since Ezekiel holds that the upper class in Jerusalem are guilty of particular wrongdoing,<sup>660</sup> he portrays their inevitable downfall as the most complete and humiliating.

According to Ezekiel, death by a variety of means will be the ultimate outcome for those remaining in Jerusalem after 597 BCE. In 14:21 Yahweh promises “my four bad judgements” (*’arba ‘at šēpātay hārā ‘īm*), which are sword, famine, evil creatures, and pestilence. Ezekiel 21:6-22 (Heb) contains a lengthy description of Yahweh’s sword and how it will cut off “both righteous and wicked” (*ṣadîq wērāšā’*; 21:8, Heb.) from Jerusalem. Ezekiel 15 is a parable comparing the residents of Jerusalem to the useless wood of the vine, which is tossed into the fire. Verse 7 states that “though they escape from the fire, the fire shall still consume them.” This will be accompanied by the desolation of the land of Judah (15:8). These descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem suggest that no one living there after 597 BCE can expect to survive. Ezekiel envisages complete physical destruction of every individual remaining in the city and a scorched-earth policy for the land that will cleanse it from its cultic and social impurities.

However, elsewhere in Ezekiel there is some suggestion that not every resident of post-597 BCE Jerusalem would be put to death. Two factors may have contributed to this

---

<sup>658</sup> Cf. Jer 4:8; 6:26; 7:29; 9:17

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Jer 13:18

<sup>660</sup> See Section 3.3

distinct ideology. The first is Ezekiel's (or a later redactor's) desire to exonerate Yahweh from the accusation of unjust communal punishment. This impulse is evident, for example, in Ezekiel 18, which indicates a theology of individual responsibility and punishment. The second and more pragmatic reason for Ezekiel's acceptance of a post-597 BCE Judean remnant is that many of the inhabitants of Judah evidently survived the destruction of 587 BCE. Some remained in the land (a fact Ezekiel barely acknowledges), whilst others were forcibly migrated to Babylonia to join the 597 BCE group. Ezekiel's community was presumably forced to confront the latter fact, meaning that either Ezekiel or a later redactor had to amend the prediction of total annihilation for the post-597 BCE population of Judah.

Therefore, there are several instances where Ezekiel predicts the survival of a post-597 BCE remnant from Judah. For example, in Ezekiel 4:12-14 Yahweh commands the prophet to eat a barley cake baked over human excrement as a sign that the people of Israel will "eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them" (*yō 'kēlû bēnē yiśrā'ēl 'et laḥmām tāmē' baggôyîm 'ăšer 'addîhem šām*; 4:13). This could refer to Ezekiel's own community, already in exile among "the nations," but the use of the imperfect (*yō 'kēlû; 'addîhem*), as well as the mention of the siege of Jerusalem in verse 16, suggests this prophecy was directed towards those still in Judah at the time. Their predicted location among the nations suggests knowledge that some of them will end up in Babylonia (and perhaps Egypt, referring to the 582 BCE migration) in the same situation as the 597 BCE exiles.

Another sign-act in Ezekiel 5 carries a similar meaning. The prophet is told to shave off his hair and divide it into three parts representing the population of Jerusalem. One



part is to be burned in the middle of the city when the siege is over; one is to be struck by the sword outside of the city; and the third is to be scattered to the wind with a sword after them (5:2). However, the prophet is to take a small number from the third part, discard some of that into the fire, and wrap the rest in his cloak to represent the tiny remnant that will survive (5:3-4).

Although this approach seems random, Ezekiel's vision in Chapter 9 suggests that there is a system behind Yahweh allowing some Jerusalemites to survive. In keeping with Ezekiel's theology of individual responsibility (Ezek 18), he envisages Yahweh choosing the survivors based on the fact that they "sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in [Jerusalem]" (*hanne'ēnāhîm wēhanne'ēnāqîm 'al kol hattô'ēbôt hanna'āšôt bētôkâh*; 9:4).<sup>661</sup> These people are marked with a *taw* on their foreheads, indicating that Yahweh's executioners should spare them when they destroy the rest of the city.

However, this sparing act of Yahweh does not mean that those saved from death are entirely innocent. Ezekiel 6 shows that any remnant after the destruction of Jerusalem will not be exempt from further judgement. Not only will the Judean remnant be scattered

---

<sup>661</sup> Although the book of Ezekiel never mentions the prophet Jeremiah, it seems to be aware of the writings attributed to him. Since they share many of the same views about activities taking place in Jerusalem, it is likely that this is the kind of Jerusalemite that Ezekiel 9:4 has in mind for Yahweh's mercy (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 44). What is confusing is Ezekiel's claim in 22:30 that there was no-one to "stand in the breach" of Jerusalem's wall to intercede on the city's behalf before Yahweh. Ezekiel specifically claims that the false prophets have not done this (13:5). Again, his failure to recognize Jeremiah is surprising. Christopher T. Begg ("The Non-Mention of Ezekiel in the Deuteronomistic History, the Book of Jeremiah, and the Chronistic History," in *Ezekiel and his Book*, ed. J. Lust [Leuven: Leuven University, 1986], 340-43 [342]) suggests that the two do not mention one another because of conflict between the Jerusalemite priesthood (Ezekiel) and the extra-Jerusalemite priesthood (Jeremiah). Perhaps Ezekiel saw himself as the only true prophet who could intercede with Yahweh (e.g. Ezek 9:8; see Section 4.3.2 for further discussion), but even this had no effect.

among the lands (Ezek 4:13; 5:3-4), but, once there, they will remember Yahweh and realise that they are experiencing his judgement (6:8-9). As a result of this epiphany,

וְנִקְטְוּ בַּפְּנִיָּהֶם אֶל־הָרָעוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לְכָל תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיהֶם

They will loathe themselves because of the evil things they have done, for all their abominations. (Ezek 6:9b)

Overall, Ezekiel's depiction of the 587 BCE exiles is not consistent. The writer seems reluctant to accept them as members of his community and what he portrays as the true continuation of the people of Israel. Since the biblical accounts state that the majority of the forced migrant population were the residents of Jerusalem (and the archaeological evidence supports this), it is likely that many of the members of the 587 BCE group were the same leaders Ezekiel criticized in his earlier prophecies.<sup>662</sup>

Yet it was only logical, at least for later redactors of Ezekiel, that those who survived the destruction of Jerusalem and shared the “wilderness” experience of exile could be part of the restored Israel if they chose to be.<sup>663</sup> The most positive portrayal of the newer exiles occurs in Ezekiel 14:22-23:

וְהָיָה נִוְתָרָה־בָּהּ פְּלִטָּה הַמּוֹצִיאִים בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת הֵנָּם יוֹצֵאִים אֲלֵיכֶם וְרֹאִיתֶם אֶת־דֶּרֶכְכֶּם וְאֶת־עֲלִילוֹתֶם וְנִחַמְתֶּם עַל־  
הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר הִבֵּאתִי עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הִבֵּאתִי עָלֶיהָ: וְנִחַמוּ אֶתְכֶּם כִּי־תִרְאוּ אֶת־דֶּרֶכְכֶּם וְאֶת־עֲלִילוֹתֶם  
וְיִדְעֶתֶם כִּי לֹא חֲנָם עָשִׂיתִי אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בָּהּ נָאֻם אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה:

---

<sup>662</sup> Although some of the elite Jerusalemites probably met a different fate. For example, 2 Kgs 25:4 records that “the men of battle” fled Jerusalem with Zedekiah when the Babylonians breached the wall and were scattered when Zedekiah was caught. Meanwhile, 2 Kgs 25:18-21 records that many of the Jerusalem elites whom Nebuzaradan captured were put to death, including “Seraiah the high priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and three keepers of the threshold... the overseer of the men of battle, and five men who appeared before the king who were found in the city, and the scribe of the officer of the army who caused the people of the land to wage war, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city.”

<sup>663</sup> This also seems to apply to the Israelite exiles who were dispersed by the Neo-Assyrians in 721 BCE. Ezek 37:19-22 envisages the reunification of Israel and Judah, both the people and the land, into a single nation (Jer 3:18 predicts the same thing).

“But a surviving element will be left in [Jerusalem], the ones who are brought out: they are sons and daughters coming out to you, and you will see their ways and their deeds and be comforted for the evil which I have brought on Jerusalem, for everything I brought on it. <sup>23</sup>They will comfort you when you see their ways and deeds, and you will know that it was not for nothing that I did what I did in [Jerusalem];” the declaration of the Lord Yahweh (Ezek 14:22-23).

Like Ezekiel 9, the suggestion here is that those who survived the destruction of Jerusalem were chosen to do so because of their righteousness. Yet in contrast to Chapter 9, where they are merely said to have been distraught at the illicit activity taking place in their city, here they are explicitly commended for their way of life such that they will be a “comfort” to the Jehoiachin exiles.

In summary, although the book of Ezekiel is overwhelmingly negative in its portrayal of the post-597 BCE residents of Judah, it reveals some development in this view, whether during the writer’s lifetime or afterwards. The Judeans remaining in Judah are separated from Ezekiel’s community in Babylonia through Yahweh’s judgement on them made manifest in their defiled, traumatised, and ultimately destroyed bodies. However, the possibility of a small percentage of their group being saved from this fate is woven throughout Ezekiel’s oracles of judgement, hinting at the 587 BCE exiles’ ultimate acceptance into the Judean community in Babylonia.<sup>664</sup> This community should also expect a period of judgement, according to Ezekiel, but one with a radically different outcome to that which Jerusalem as a city will face.

### **3.4.2 Bodily Renewal**

There are three main stages of the restoration of the exilic community according to Ezekiel, not necessarily always in the same order. The first is the new Exodus, whereby

---

<sup>664</sup> Ahn, “Ezekiel 15,” 115.

Yahweh will gather the scattered exiles together in preparation for returning them to their homeland. The second is the cleansing of the land from its disgusting things (*šiqqûšîm* and *tô 'ăbôt*) so that it is ready to be inhabited by the new, pure bodies of the community. The third aspect of restoration will be the bestowal of these new bodies: bodies revived from their past trauma through their possession of a new heart and new spirit loyal to Yahweh.

There are several places in Ezekiel where all three steps are outlined, such as 11:17-20.

לְכוּ אָמַר כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים וְאֶסְפַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִפְצַוְתֶּם בָּהֶם וְנִתְּמִי לָכֶם אֶת־אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּבְאוֹ־שָׁמָּה וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־כָּל־שִׁקּוּצֶיהָ וְאֶת־כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיהָ מִמֶּנָּה: וְנִתְּמִי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד וְרוּחַ חַדָּשָׁה אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִסְרֹתִי לֵב הָאֲבֹן מִבְּשָׁרְךָם וְנִתְּמִי לָהֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר: לִמְעַן בְּחַקְתִּי יֵלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטִי יִשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשׂוּ אֶתֶּם וְהָיִי לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים

Therefore say, “Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you from the lands where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’”<sup>18</sup> And when they come there, they will remove all its disgusting things (*šiqqûšêhā*) and all its abominations (*tô 'ăbôtêhā*) from it.<sup>19</sup> And I will give them one heart and set a new spirit in them, and I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,<sup>20</sup> in order that they will walk in my statutes and keep my judgements and do them, and they will be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek 11:17-20).

First there is the gathering and unifying of the community designated to be the continuation of the true Israel. This is followed by the giving of the land, in a re-enactment of the original settlement of Canaan. Next, the people will demonstrate that they have turned away from worshipping idols by cleansing the land of “all its disgusting things and abominations” (*'et-kol-šiqqûšêhā wě'et-kol-tô 'ăbôtêhā*) which those who remained in Judah placed there. There is no question in Ezekiel’s mind that all of his community will comply with this, perhaps in anticipation of Yahweh giving them “one

heart” (*lēb ’ehād*) and a “new spirit” (*rûah ḥădāšā*; 11:19), though this renewal only occurs after the dirty work has been done. Ezekiel further specifies that the new body organ will be a “heart of flesh” (*lēb bāšār*) to replace the “heart of stone” (*lēb hā’eben*; 11:19) that the people had previously possessed. The new heart is what enables the people to walk in Yahweh’s statutes and keep his commandments; that is, to uphold their end of his covenant.<sup>665</sup> Ezekiel’s suggestion is that only Yahweh’s restorative action can break the cycle of transgression and forgiveness that has defined Israel’s history until that point.<sup>666</sup>

A similar process is described in 36:24-28, this time phrased in the cultic language of impurity and purification (described using the roots *tm*’ and *thr* respectively):

וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הַגּוֹיִם וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֶדְמַתְכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיָּם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טִמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב חֲדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חֲדָשׁה אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׁרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר: וְאֶת־רוּחִי אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־בְּחֻקֵּי תִלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם: וְיִשְׁבְּתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם וְהָיִיתֶם לִי לְעָם וְאֶנֶּכִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the lands and bring you to your land.<sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water (*mayim tēhōrīm*) on you so that you will be clean (*tēhartem*) from all your impurities (*tum’ōtēkem*), and I will cleanse you from all your idols.<sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and set a new spirit in you and remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> I will set my spirit in you and make you walk in my statutes and keep my judgements so you will do them.<sup>28</sup> You will dwell in the land which I gave your fathers and you will be my people and I will be your God (Ezek 36:24-28).

Here, the cleansing act of sprinkling water is inserted before the placement of the new heart of flesh and the new spirit. The outcome is the same as in Ezekiel 11:19-20:

<sup>665</sup> Cf. Jer 17:1; 31:33; 32:39

<sup>666</sup> Franz Sedlmeier, “The Proclamation of Salvation in the Book of Ezekiel: Restoration or Traces of ‘Eschatological’ Hope?” in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, FAT 112, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 31-53 (35).

Yahweh's restorative acts on the physical and spiritual bodies of the Judeans causes them to be obedient to his covenant.

In terms of depiction of the physical restoration of the exiles, Ezekiel 37:1-14 is perhaps the most explicit: Ezekiel sees a vision of the dry bones of the house of Israel being brought to new life by Yahweh. As Anja Klein points out, since the vision takes place in "the valley" (*bēṭôk habbiq'â*; 37:1) it probably indicates the same Babylonian location as the prophet's first vision of Yahweh in 3:22.<sup>667</sup> This location suggests that the bones belong to members of the house of Israel who underwent forced migration, not to those who remained in Judah. The Babylonian location of the bones is further supported by Yahweh's promise to the resurrected people that he will bring them into the land of Israel (37:12), again evoking the Exodus from Egypt and original settlement in the land.

In the vision of Ezekiel 37, the community chosen to be the continuation of Israel receive entirely new bodies in place of their skeletal fragments, consisting of sinews (*gidîm*), flesh (*bāśār*), skin (*ôr*), and finally, breath or spirit (*rûah*; 37:6-10).<sup>668</sup> Klein recognizes a later redaction in verses 13b-14, which specify that the spirit (this time explicitly "of Yahweh") is given to the people as they are placed in the land of Israel in order that it cannot be contaminated by being in a foreign land.<sup>669</sup> By contrast, the bestowal of the breath/ spirit (which comes from "the four winds"<sup>670</sup>) in verse 10

---

<sup>667</sup> Anja Klein, "Salvation for Sheep and Bones: Ezek 34 and 37 as Corner Pillars of Ezekiel's Prophecy of Salvation," in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, FAT 112, ed. William Tooman and Penelope Barter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 179-93 (183).

<sup>668</sup> Compare this to the fate of the bones of the remnant in Jeremiah, which do not receive a burial and are abandoned (Jer 8:1-2; 16:6-8; 31:40).

<sup>669</sup> As food is in Ezek 4:13.

<sup>670</sup> Though note that G- has "my breath" in 37:6.

culminates in the resurrected people standing up as “a very, very great army” (*ḥayil gādōl mē’ôd-mē’ôd*) as if ready for war.<sup>671</sup>

Daniel Smith-Christopher interprets the vision in Ezekiel 37 as a counter-narrative against Israel’s oppression at the hands of Mesopotamian enemies, intentionally set in a context of trauma and warfare.<sup>672</sup> It is one of the only occasions where Ezekiel reflects on how the trauma of exile has affected the physical bodies that make up his community, as opposed to the ritual impurities (*tum’ôt*, as in 36:25) they have brought upon themselves. Both issues can only be solved by Yahweh’s revivifying actions of providing new bodies and spirits. These actions do not represent a reversal of events, which would only take Ezekiel’s community back to where they were before, vulnerable to physical defeat and contamination. Instead, they are a new turn of events intended to create an idealized community that will not go astray again.

What presents a challenge to Ezekiel’s ideology are the Judeans who underwent forced migration and turned away from Yahweh. Although they had the opportunity to be part of the continuation of the true Israel by virtue of being in Babylonia, Ezekiel could not maintain the ideal of Yahweh’s justice while these Judeans went without punishment. This dilemma is dealt with in Chapter 20, where Ezekiel envisages a further purge during the wilderness period. Here, the first step is the same as in Chapter 11: being brought out from the foreign peoples and gathered together (20:34). Instead of a physical restoration, the renewal of Israel’s loyalty to Yahweh’s covenant will be enacted by “passing under

---

<sup>671</sup> G- translates *synagōgē*, possibly removing the military connotation of *ḥayil*.

<sup>672</sup> Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Deconstructing Terror in Ezekiel: The ‘Valley of Bones’ Vision as Response to Trauma,” in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, FAT 112, ed. William Tooman and Penelope Barter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 391-416 (394-401).

the rod” (20:37), most likely a reference to a shepherd counting and sorting out his sheep.<sup>673</sup> As part of this process, the “rebels” who still remain among the community will be separated from the rest and designated to remain in the wilderness rather than enter the land and risk defiling it again.

The restoration of the people of Israel is matched by the restoration of the land they will be brought to inhabit. Ezekiel demonstrated that those who remained in Judah defiled (*ṭm*’; 5:11; 22:3-5, 10-11, 26) the land with disgusting things, abominations, and impurities (*šiqqûšîm*, *tô ‘ăbôt*, and *ṭum ‘ôt*; 5:11; 7:20; 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17; 36:25). The Temple was the epicentre of the defilement. Therefore, Ezekiel must also show that the defilement will be removed in preparation for the newly cleansed people of Israel to inhabit the land. Ezekiel 11:18 has the community doing this themselves by removing “all its disgusting things and abominations” (*šiqqûšîm* and *tô ‘ăbôt*). Since these terms are used exclusively of cultic aberrations in Ezekiel, the writer probably has in mind the idols, images, high places, and other non-approved cultic objects left there by the remnant. A similar situation occurs in 39:12-15, which describes the people of Israel burying the bones of the defeated army of Gog. Unlike the bones of the house of Israel in Ezekiel 37, the dead bodies of a foreign army defile the land and must be buried in order to cleanse it (*ṭhr*; 39:12).

In Ezekiel 34 and 36 it is Yahweh who will do the preparatory work instead of the people themselves. These passages focus on the safety and fruitfulness of the land rather than its cultic purity (cf. Ezek 47:1-12). As the rightful ruler of the people of Israel, Yahweh promises to banish wild animals (34:25, 28), send down the rain in its season

---

<sup>673</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 651. Cf. Jer 33:13; Lev 27:32.



(34:26), and make the land fruitful (34:27, 29; 36:8, 11). Ezekiel 36:9-10 particularly evokes reclaiming abandoned land for cultivation. Not only does this anticipate the restoration of order and prosperity, it also reinforces the concept of the land of Israel being left empty after the destruction of Jerusalem. It was much more convenient for the exiles to imagine they could simply return to their abandoned ancestral properties and reinstate order than to acknowledge that their fellow countrymen who remained in the land had probably taken over the task (in some areas at least).<sup>674</sup>

After all of this has taken place, the people can expect a life of security and prosperity in the revitalized land. Ezekiel 28:26 says,

וַיָּשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ לְבֵטַח וַיְבִנוּ בָתֵּימָם וַיִּטְעוּ כְרָמֵימָם וַיָּשְׁבוּ לְבֵטַח בְּעֲשׂוֹתִי שְׁפָטִים בְּכָל הַשָּׂאֲטִים אֲתָם מִסְּבִיבוֹתָם וַיָּדְעוּ  
כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

They will dwell in [their land which I gave to my servant Jacob] in security, and they will build houses and plant vineyards and dwell in security as I enact judgement on all those around them who quarreled with them, so that they will know that I, Yahweh, am their God (Ezek 28:26).

In this passage, not only have the true people of Israel (those who were scattered among the peoples; 28:25)<sup>675</sup> been restored to their heritage land, but a more comfortable state of affairs has been reinstated whereby Yahweh is engaged in judging Israel's enemies rather than Israel itself.

---

<sup>674</sup> Archaeological evidence suggests that the Benjaminite area around Mizpah, Gedaliah's capital, continued to be productive during the Babylonian exile, whilst other areas of Judah suffered much more decline (Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 24-25). Some scholars, such as Hans Barstad, suggest a much greater area of economic and demographic continuity in Judah (Barstad, "The City State of Jerusalem," 34).

<sup>675</sup> This includes the northern tribes of Israel according to Ezek 47:21-23.

### 3.5 Conclusions

Ezekiel uses a variety of techniques to create boundaries between his community of Judeans in forced migration and the Judeans who remained in Judah. In order to undermine their previous identity as a single ethnic group, he presents the remnant as having genealogical origins in the land of Canaan, potentially suggesting that their practices of intermarriage with other ethnic groups have obscured their Israelite ethnicity. By contrast, the group in Babylonia is portrayed as the continuation of the true Israel, who have their origins in the Exodus from Egypt.

These diverse ethnic backgrounds are further supported by the behaviours Ezekiel attributes to the two groups. The remnant is portrayed as neglecting to practice exclusive Yahwism, which for Ezekiel is central to Israelite identity. Instead, they have adopted all manner of foreign religious practices, most of which are linked to idol-worship. By contrast, the exilic community has been removed from this contaminating (*tm*) milieu (Ezek 5:11; 22:3-5, 10-11, 26) and given a chance to start over, albeit in a different kind of unclean environment (in Babylonia; 4:13). Ezekiel exhorts his community to practice exclusive Yahwism despite their lack of a Temple, which is not to say that they necessarily follow suit (14:3-8; 20:31). Ezekiel outlines a detailed cultic calendar to ensure that the community can regularly assert their communal identity as Yahwists.

Ezekiel places the majority of the blame for the sinfulness of Judah on the leadership in Jerusalem, accusing them of corrupting the Temple and exploiting vulnerable members of society instead of protecting them as they are supposed to. As a result, the elites of the remnant community will experience Yahweh's punishment first and foremost. According to Ezekiel, the future outlook of those remaining in Judah is incredibly bleak and will

result in the death of the vast majority, leaving the land free to be cleansed by Yahweh in anticipation for the return of the exiles. A small number may survive to join the diaspora community, who can anticipate a future renewal of their bodies and spirits such that they will be unified in their faithfulness to Yahweh's covenant and will be ready to return to the similarly renewed land. In this way Ezekiel managed to change perceptions of the exile so that his community did not see itself as the one singled out for punishment, but rather the one singled out for protection and the promise of a better future.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Diverse Bodies**

Chapters Two and Three have demonstrated how the book of Ezekiel attests to his community's efforts to comprehend how their forced migration to Babylonia would affect their identity as Judeans. Yet no group identity is completely homogenous, experienced and expressed in the same way by all its members. Factors such as age, gender, class, and profession affect the ways in which different people experience and express membership of their community. The first group of Judeans to be exiled to Babylonia in 597 BCE was no different. In order to understand their processes of identity re-formation during this time of upheaval and change, the diversity within the community must be acknowledged and explored.

Ezekiel's perspective is that of an elite male educated in the Priestly tradition and embodying a prophetic role. The ways in which he presents himself and others who share his class, gender, and professional identities reveal something about how he views the social structure of his idealised Judean community. He dictates certain bodily requirements, clothing, and practices for priests (Section 4.2) and exemplifies what he believes to be the behaviour of a true prophet (Section 4.3).

Ezekiel also alludes to members of his community with gender and professional identities different from his own, including women (Section 4.1), Levites, lay people, and those whom he considers false prophets. By describing some of their clothing and practices, he provides information about the makeup of the Judean exilic community and his views about how these other social identities should or do fit into it. The practices

Ezekiel mentions, even when exaggerated for rhetorical effect, reveal how he conceives of the reconfigured power structures of his community in Babylonia. He is particularly concerned with controlling access to the Temple and by extension, the deity. Ezekiel's ideology creates a space for his own role as a religious leader and the mediator of traditions for the Judeans in Babylonia. This is especially true with regard to the women mentioned in the book.

#### 4.1 Women

Ezekiel's community of Judeans in Babylonia must have included women, whose experience of forced migration would have differed from that of men. Additionally, Judean women were not a single, monolithic group, but were themselves divided by different social experiences and expectations depending on their age, class, and profession or social role. Recognizing these factors helps to ensure that an understanding of the forced migrant Judeans' identity formation is not based solely on the viewpoint of elite, adult men, who realistically can have made up only one part of the community.

Like other aspects of social identity, gender is a social construct influenced by historical context and the larger social structure. The idea that gender exists as a naturally-occurring binary has been proven false through anthropological studies of numerous societies that do not share this social structure.<sup>676</sup> However, the book of Ezekiel strongly asserts a binary concept of male and female gender roles.<sup>677</sup>

---

<sup>676</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 43.

<sup>677</sup> This is the case in the Priestly writings of the Hebrew Bible as well. Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible*, BIS 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 132-33; S. Tamar Kamionkowski, "Gender Ambiguity and Subversive Metaphor in Ezekiel 16" (PhD diss. Brandeis University, 2000), 3-5.

During periods of societal upheaval, such as forced migrations, all aspects of life are called into question. As part of the reconfiguring of ethnic and national identity that takes place, social relationships, including gender roles, undergo significant changes.<sup>678</sup> The book of Ezekiel reveals the writer's ideology concerning the expression of female social identity within Judean society. Several scholars have suggested that this ideology is heavily influenced by the context of forced migration, and especially of the trauma that Ezekiel and his community experienced. Not only would the Judean women have been particularly vulnerable to the Babylonian conquerors, but the emasculating experience of military defeat and loss of status may have led to hyper-virility on the part of Judean men as well.<sup>679</sup> Tamar Kamionkowski explains:

Gender scripts are upset during times of social upheaval. Defeat in war, decimation of homes and towns and new governing bodies displaced men from their jobs, divided men from their families and gave rise to a host of new behavioral challenges. Numerous sociological studies on male victims of war have shown the ways in which men experience a sense of emasculation through victimization.<sup>680</sup>

These factors are significant for understanding the context in which gender roles may have been reconfigured during the early years of the Judean exile in Babylonia. It is also important to consider that women were as diverse a group as men, and not all their experiences would have been universal even within the same community. Ezekiel mentions several women, either real or imagined, who differ from one another in age, class, and profession or social role. It is worth at least attempting to understand how these

---

<sup>678</sup> Krulfeld and Camino, "Introduction," x-xii; Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>679</sup> Kamionkowski, "Gender Ambiguity," 73.

<sup>680</sup> Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos*, 60-61.

other social identities interacted with concepts of gender in a society that, like all societies, was stratified in multiple ways. Ezekiel's descriptions of these women include details that reveal how he perceives their social relationships. He details their clothing, jewellery, cosmetics, and activities in ways that reveal how women's bodily modifications and practices could express their distinct identities.<sup>681</sup> Ezekiel 16:7-14 depicts a woman who is fulfilling a social role deemed appropriate for her age and gender: that of a bride (Section 4.1.1). By contrast, Ezekiel 16:15-19; 23:40-44; and 13:17-23 all describe women whom Ezekiel deems to be overstepping the bounds of their social roles, whether through inappropriate sexual practices or ritual activity (Section 4.1.2). Ezekiel wishes to demonstrate that women who behave in these ways will be punished with physical experiences of trauma akin to those experienced in the Babylonian defeat and forced migrations (Section 4.1.3). In so doing, he suggests that some of the disaster which befell Judah was the result of the behaviour of its women. Ezekiel warns the women in his community to conform to the gender roles he lays out for them or risk further destruction.

#### **4.1.1 Well-Behaved Women**

Ezekiel 16 tells the story of a metaphorical Jerusalem, symbolized by a woman who is brought into a relationship with Yahweh only to reject him for foreign men and

---

<sup>681</sup> The archaeological theorist Margarita Díaz-Andreu ("Gender Identity," in *The Archaeology of Identity*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al. [London: Routledge, 2005], 13-42 [23]) writes: "The body can be considered as one type of material culture on which social identities are primarily portrayed through dress, painting, tattoos, and decoration."

idols.<sup>682</sup> Even though this chapter is not about an historical, human woman, Ezekiel

paints a vivid picture of the type of woman he believes Jerusalem would be:

רַבָּה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְּתִיךָ וְתִרְבִּי וְתִגְדְּלִי וְתִבְאִי בַעֲדֵי עֲדָיִים שְׂדִים נִכְנֹו וישְׁעָרָה צֶמַח וְאֶת עֵרֹם וְעָרְיָה: וְאֶעֱבֹר  
עָלֶיךָ וְאֶרְאֶה וְהִנֵּה עֵתָה עֵת דָּדִים וְאֶפְרֹשׁ כְּנָפִי עָלֶיךָ וְאֶכְסֶה עֲרוֹתָה וְאֶשְׁבַּע לְךָ וְאָבֹא בְּבְרִית אִתְּךָ נָאִם אֲדֹנָי  
יְהוִה וְתִהְיִי לִי: וְאֶרְחָצְךָ בַּמַּיִם וְאֶשְׁטָף דָּמֶיךָ מֵעַלְיֶךָ וְאֶסְכֶּךָ בַּשָּׁמֶן: וְאֶלְבִּישְׁךָ רֻקְמָה וְאֶנְעֵלְךָ תַּחֲשׁ וְאֶחְבֹּשְׁךָ בַּשֹּׁשׁ  
וְאֶכְסֶה מְשִׁי: וְאֶעֱדֶךָ עֲדִי וְאֶתְּנֶה צְמִידִים עַל־יְדֶיךָ וְרִבִּיד עַל־גְּרוֹנְךָ: וְאֶתֵּן נֶזֶם עַל־אָפֶךָ וְעִגְלִים עַל־אָזְנוֹךָ וְעֹטְרֹת  
תַּפְּאֶרֶת בְּרָאשְׁךָ: וְתַעֲדִי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וּמִלְבוּשֶׁךָ שִׁשִּׁי [שֹׁשׁ] וְמְשִׁי וְרֻקְמָה סֶלֶת וְדִבֶּשׁ וְשָׁמֶן אֶכְלֹתִי [אֶכְלֹת] וְתִיפִי  
בְּמָאֵד מָאֵד וְתַצְלַחִי לְמִלּוּכָה: וַיֵּצֵא לָךְ שֵׁם בְּגוֹיִם בְּיִפְיָךָ כִּי אֶל כָּלִיל הוּא בְּהִדְרִי אֶשְׁרֹשְׁמֶתִי עָלֶיךָ נָאִם אֲדֹנָי  
יְהוִה:

I set you up to flourish<sup>683</sup> like a sprout of the field, and you grew up and became tall and came into the adornment of your “ornaments:” your breasts had been established and your hair had sprouted, yet you were naked and bare.<sup>8</sup> I passed by you and saw you, and your time was the time of lovers, so I spread my hem over you and covered your nakedness, and I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you – the declaration of the Lord Yahweh – and you were mine.<sup>9</sup> I washed you with water and rinsed off your blood from you and anointed you with the oil.<sup>10</sup> I clothed you with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather sandals, and I bound you in the linen and covered you with a garment.<sup>11</sup> I adorned you with ornaments and set bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck.<sup>12</sup> I set a ring on your nose and hoops on your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.<sup>13</sup> You were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was linen and silk<sup>684</sup> and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour, honey, and oil, and you were very, very beautiful and you prospered in royalty.<sup>14</sup> Your reputation went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect in my splendour which I set on you – the declaration of the Lord Yahweh (Ezek 16:7-14).

The terms Ezekiel uses to describe this woman’s physical appearance and dress evoke elements of her social status and role that would only resonate with his audience if these

<sup>682</sup> Treatment of Ezek 16:3-6 can be found in Section 3.1.2.

<sup>683</sup> The literal translation of *rēbābā* is “a multitude.”

<sup>684</sup> The word *mešī* only appears in Ezek 16:10 and 13. Its meaning is unclear; it is traditionally translated “silk,” but the earliest reference to silk in West Asia dates to the 4th century BCE (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 279). The word has no Semitic cognates, though suggestions include a relationship to Egyptian *mšj*, a designation for a type of garment (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 484) or Hittite *maššiya*, a veil or shawl (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 279).



elements had some basis in real life. The passage in Ezekiel 16:7-14 describes a young woman who has recently reached adulthood. As such, she experiences the ritual of marriage so that she can fulfil the social role expected of an adult woman: that of a wife and mother.

The effect of age on an individual's social identity, including their gender identity, is something that is often given much less weight than other factors. Although age is a process that undeniably occurs in every human body, concepts such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age are as much social constructs as are concepts of gender or class.<sup>685</sup> The passage from one age group to another can affect what rights a member of society has or what expectations are placed on them, and this also varies between genders.<sup>686</sup> The societal age categorizations of women are often determined by their ability or inability to bear children, and this is made explicit in Ezekiel 16. According to verse 8, the woman is deemed to be of marriageable age when "[her] time was the time for lovers," which occurs once it has been observed that her "breasts became firm and [her] hair had sprouted" (16:7).

Meir Malul has shown through comparative work with Mesopotamian texts that prior to these symbols of adulthood, the relationship between the female child and Yahweh was one of adoption.<sup>687</sup> The language of exposure, the wilderness, and the child being left in her birth blood until claimed by Yahweh all symbolize that her birth parents had

---

<sup>685</sup> Lucy, "The Archaeology of Age," 43.

<sup>686</sup> Díaz-Andreu, "Gender Identity," 15.

<sup>687</sup> Malul, "Adoption of Foundlings," 99-111.

relinquished all claim to her as soon as she was born.<sup>688</sup> Yet when the young woman grows up, Yahweh changes their relationship to one of marriage.<sup>689</sup> He effects this through two actions in 16:8: covering the woman's nakedness with the hem of his garment and declaring to her that she is his.

The first of these is known elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: In Ruth 3:9, Ruth asks Boaz to spread the hem (literally "wing") of his garment over her to symbolize that he will take her for his wife.<sup>690</sup> The parallel is especially close if we consider that Boaz was Ruth's male next-of-kin, responsible for "redeeming" her from debt or slavery should she fall into either: he calls her "my daughter" in Ruth 3:10. Like Yahweh in Ezekiel's metaphor, the most effective way for a man to protect his female ward from poverty was through marriage. Yet this was only appropriate in certain familial relationships: Deuteronomy 23:1 warns that a son who has sexual relations with his father's wife is effectively uncovering the hem of his own father's garment; that is, engaging in incest.<sup>691</sup>

The second way that Yahweh makes Jerusalem his wife is through entering into a covenant with her and making an oath, perhaps even using the declarative phrase at the end of verse 8: "You are mine." This process sounds similar to that documented in

---

<sup>688</sup> See Section 3.1.2

<sup>689</sup> Raymond Westbrook ("Old Babylonian Marriage Law" [PhD diss., Yale University, 1989], 58) argues that in the ancient Near East, the processes of adoption and of marriage were the same, i.e. a contract between a man and the parents of his adopted child or bride. In the metaphor of Ezekiel 16, since Yahweh was already the adopted father of the girl, the contract required in order to marry her would have been with himself. The incestuous nature of the situation is further compounded by the evidence that Israelite marriage contracts may have included an oath in the name of Yahweh (Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 33 n.26). This is suggested by the use of the verb *šb* ' , to swear, in 16:8, since swearing usually invoked the power of deities to uphold the oath. If this was the case, then Ezekiel portrays Yahweh as both parties in the contract as well as the deity by whom the contract is sworn. Thus, when the woman commits adultery, he is the injured party not once, not twice (as Galambush suggests), but three times over.

<sup>690</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 277.

<sup>691</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 340.

marriage contracts found at Elephantine, where the husband declares, “She is my wife and I am her husband.”<sup>692</sup> A contract from Āl-Yāhūdu documenting a marriage between a Judean bride and a Babylonian man states that all that is required for a divorce is for the man to state, “She will not be a wife.”<sup>693</sup> All of this suggests that the pertinent statement uttered by the husband in the correct context could function as a word-act either effecting or dissolving the marriage.<sup>694</sup> There is no indication that the woman’s prerogative or even consent is required in either situation.

It is unusual for a regular human marriage to be referred to as a “covenant” (*bērît*). Conversely, the covenant (*bērît*) between Israel and its God is often referred to in terms of a male-female marriage, as it is in Ezekiel 16.<sup>695</sup> Likewise, the use of the language of love is common in Mesopotamian vassal treaties to describe the relationship between subjects and their rulers. The covenant between Yahweh and his people is often

---

<sup>692</sup> Reuven Yaron, *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 46ff. Yaron writes, “A party’s assertion of the existence of a certain legal relationship, his ‘acknowledging’ it, is creative of that relationship” (46).

<sup>693</sup> Abraham, “Negotiating Marriage,” 54. The same thing seems to be happening in Hos 2:4 (Heb). The Elephantine documents suggest that the woman has to utter the divorce declaration as well, though it is unclear whether she can initiate it (Yaron, *Aramaic Papyri*, 47).

<sup>694</sup> J.L. Austin was the first to theorize that certain words are performative when uttered by the right person in a pre-designated context. The first example he used to support his argument was the Church of England marriage ceremony in which to say the words “I do” in response to a particular question and in the right circumstances is not simply to agree to the marriage, but to effect it (J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962], 4-11). In Austin’s example, both marrying parties are required to say the words for the marriage to take place. In the Āl-Yāhūdu and Elephantine documentation, there is only evidence that the male party effects the marriage. Even if the bride had some prior input in the marriage, her consent (or rather, that of her male guardian, according to Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 33 n.26) is merely implied by her presence at the ceremony.

<sup>695</sup> David M. Carr and Colleen M. Conway, “The Divine-Human Marriage Matrix and Constructions of Gender and ‘Bodies’ in the Christian Bible,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 275-304 (288).

compared to these vassal treaties.<sup>696</sup> Love in this context is not a relationship of affection but one of power and control.<sup>697</sup> There was usually some stipulation that the suzerain king would provide for his vassals in exchange for their exclusive loyalty. The historical evidence suggests that if this was carried out at all, it was only on the suzerain king's terms.<sup>698</sup> Additionally, the dominant party was not bound by the obligation of exclusive loyalty to the non-dominant party.<sup>699</sup>

In ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties and marriages alike, any breach of the contract resulted in severe punishment for the non-dominant partner only.<sup>700</sup> In the scenario evoked by Ezekiel 16, Yahweh clearly provides generously for his wife, upholding his side of the covenant to the fullest extent. Yet even if he had not done so, his wife would have been expected to maintain exclusive loyalty to him or face the consequences. One treaty between the Neo-Assyrian king Ashur-nirari V and his vassal Mati'ilu of Arpad makes this particularly clear in terms evoking the darker side of the male-female relationship metaphor. The curse section threatens that should the vassal be

---

<sup>696</sup> Meir Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism*, AOAT (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 174-75; Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," *ABD*, 1180-88; Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 32-34.

<sup>697</sup> Carr and Conway, "The Divine-Human Marriage Matrix," 288.

<sup>698</sup> For example, in the Amarna Letters vassal kings consistently write to the Pharaoh asking for military assistance against the *ḫabiru* and are ignored. Likewise, in letters found at Ugarit, the king begs his Hittite suzerain for help against the encroaching Sea Peoples, but to no avail.

<sup>699</sup> Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 33.

<sup>700</sup> This included Israelite marriages, according to Jacob Milgrom's study in *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance*, SJLA 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 134 n.12.

unfaithful, he will be turned into a prostitute; a punishment bearing a striking resemblance on that enacted upon Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16:37-39.<sup>701</sup>

*šum-mu* <sup>m</sup>KI.MIN *ina a-de-e an-nu-ti šá* <sup>m</sup>aššur-ERIM.[GABA] MAN KUR-aš-šur  
*iḫ-ti-ti* <sup>m</sup>KI.MIN *lu MÍ.ḫa-rim-tú LÚ\*.ERIM.[MEŠ-šú] lu MÍ.MEŠ*  
*GIM MÍ.ḫa-rim-tú ina re-bit URU-šú-n[u nid-n]u lim-ḫu-ru*

If Mati'-ilu sins against this treaty with Aššur-nerari, king of Assyria, may Mati'-ilu become a prostitute, his soldiers women, may they receive [a gift] in the square of their cities like a prostitute.<sup>702</sup>

Such is the relationship that Jerusalem, as a woman, is brought into on her wedding day in Ezekiel 16:8-13. Unlike the metaphorical bride in Jeremiah 2:2, who follows Yahweh in the desert and expresses her love for him (both *ḥesed* and *'ahābā*), the young woman in Ezekiel 16 is a completely passive participant in the first stages of her marriage.<sup>703</sup> This is illustrated by how she is prepared for marriage. The ablutions of washing and anointing with oil were usually carried out by the woman herself, as Ruth 3:3 and Susannah 15-16 attest.<sup>704</sup> Yet in Ezekiel 16:9 it is Yahweh who carries out these rituals himself.<sup>705</sup>

<sup>701</sup> Bergmann, "We Have Seen the Enemy," 135.

<sup>702</sup> SAA 2, 2 V 8-10 (Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, 12). Similarly, in Mati'ilu's treaty with a king called Bar-Ga'yah of an unidentified nation, one of the curses should Mati'ilu break the treaty reads: "[And just as the prostitute is stripped, s]o will the women of Mati'el and the women of his offspring and the women of his no[bles] be stripped" (Sefire I A 40-41; Heath Dewrell, "Human Beings as Ritual Objects: A Reexamination of Sefire I A, 35b-42," *Maarav* 17/1 [2010], 31-55 [35]).

<sup>703</sup> Her passivity is highlighted by the use of verbs in the uncommon *Hophal* and *Qal* passive stems in 16:4.

<sup>704</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 484.

<sup>705</sup> Perhaps he does so in order to make up for the neglect the girl experienced as a baby when she should have had parents to wash and anoint her. This might explain the (metaphorical) presence of blood in this verse as the birth blood that was never rinsed off her according to Ezek 16:4 (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 278). Menstrual blood, though it would fittingly indicate her coming-of-age as a young woman, seems unlikely since it would preclude the consummation of the marriage according to Priestly law (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 484). Virginal bleeding like that described in Deut 22:13-21 might be what is referred to, although that would presumably occur after the marriage ceremony. Zimmerli suggests it is a later insertion related to the blood of purification from a ritual ordinance for the union of marriage

As the girl becomes a woman and the unmarried woman becomes a bride, the outcast, considered so insignificant that she was never even washed or clothed, becomes a woman of the highest status: a queen. Not only does Ezekiel 16:7-14 mention her age and anticipated social role as a woman; it also provides information about the high class and status she gains through marriage. It was not uncommon for a wealthy groom to give gifts to his bride and her family, as the case of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24:53 attests. Yet the bride's family would often provide the young woman with items, especially clothing, and/or monetary support to equip her for her new role as a wife.<sup>706</sup>

In Ezekiel 16, the young woman is completely without family, which would put her in an incredibly vulnerable position with regard to the kind of marriage, if any, she could expect. Instead, in verses 10-13 Yahweh provides the most lavish gifts and dowry imaginable: the most expensive fabrics for her wardrobe (embroidered cloth, leather, linen), an abundance of gold and silver jewellery (bracelets, necklaces, nose-rings, earrings), and the most luxurious food provisions (fine flour, honey, and oil). Finally, the ultimate symbol of her high status is placed on her head: a beautiful crown ( *'ăṭeret tip̄'eret*). Having been pampered and clothed, she looks not only the part of a bride and respectable wife, but also of a queen, a beautiful consort appropriate for a god.<sup>707</sup>

There is yet more significance to Ezekiel's description of this woman, however. Julie Galambush showed that the clothing she is dressed in is made up of the same materials

---

(Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 340). If a later addition, it seems more likely that the editor interpreted verse 9 as a parallel to the birth rituals listed in verse 4 and added the blood clause to match these.

<sup>706</sup> Abraham ("Negotiating Marriage," 53) claims that a dowry was considered necessary for a legal marriage in pre-exilic Judah.

<sup>707</sup> The fitness of beauty for royalty seems to have been a commonly-held belief, e.g. Ps 45:3; Isa 33:17; 1 Sam 16:12, 18; 17:42; 2 Sam 14:25 (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 279).

used in the adornment of the Tabernacle and later Temple. This is unlikely to be a coincidence as some of the terms, such as *taḥaš* for leather, only occur elsewhere in the context of the Tabernacle and its cultic paraphernalia. Others, such as *riqmâ* and *šēš*, only occur in conjunction to describe the materials and furnishings of the Tabernacle.<sup>708</sup> Furthermore, the fine flour and oil with which she is fed are the components of offerings made at the Temple according to Leviticus 2:4.<sup>709</sup>

Ezekiel's message, therefore, is twofold: first, that Jerusalem was undeserving of Yahweh's notice and yet received his most lavish gifts, something for which she should have had eternal gratitude. Second, by evoking the trappings of the upper class, including those employed in the Jerusalem Temple, he indicates whom he views as the real perpetrators of the breach of the covenant with Yahweh. Brad Kelle has already suggested that the ruling houses and elite of Jerusalem are the primary target of Ezekiel's censure. Kelle's argument rests on target audience being predominantly male, interpreting Ezekiel's use of a woman to symbolize them as intentionally emasculating.<sup>710</sup> Although there is much to commend Kelle's interpretation, Ezekiel's choice to use women to illustrate his rhetoric is based on more than a desire to humiliate men. He wishes to communicate a message to the women of his community as well.

---

<sup>708</sup> Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 95.

<sup>709</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 279; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 480.

<sup>710</sup> Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric," 107ff.

#### 4.1.2 Badly-behaved Women

*Ezekiel 16:15-19 and 23:40-44*

Instead of behaving as a wife would be expected to behave, the woman in Ezekiel 16 does the exact opposite. Ezekiel 16:15-19 illustrates the situation:

ותבטחי בִּיפִיךָ ותזני על־שִׁמְךָ ותשפְּכִי אֶת־תְּזוּנוֹתֶיךָ עַל־כָּל־עוֹבֵר לוֹ־יָהּ: ותקחי מִבְּגְדֶיךָ ותַעֲשִׂי־לָךְ כְּמוֹת טְלָאוֹת ותזני עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא בָאוֹת וְלֹא יִהְיֶה: ותקחי כָּלִי תַפְאֲרֶתךָ מִזֶּהָבִי וּמִכֶּסֶּפִי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָךְ ותַעֲשִׂי־לָךְ צִלְמֵי זָכָר ותזני־בָּם: ותקחי אֶת־בְּגְדֵי רַקְמָתךָ ותִכְסִּים וְשִׁמְנֵי וקִטְרֹתֵי נִתְמִי [נִתְמִי] לַפְּנֵיהֶם: וְלַחֲמִי אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָךְ סֶלֶת וְשֶׁמֶן ודֹבֶשׁ הֶאֱכַלְתִּיךָ ונִתְמִיתִּי לַפְּנֵיהֶם לְרִיחַ נִיחַח וַיְהִי נֶאֱמַר אֵלַי יְהוָה:

But you trusted in your beauty and were promiscuous on account of your name, and you poured out your fornications on anyone who passed by: it became his. <sup>16</sup>You took some of your clothes and made *patched* high places for yourself and were promiscuous upon [your clothes], *which have not been, nor will it be (again)*. <sup>17</sup>You took your beautiful ornaments of my silver and my gold, which I gave you, and made male images for yourself; and you were promiscuous with them. <sup>18</sup>You took your embroidered clothes and covered them, and set my oil and incense before them. <sup>19</sup>And as for my bread, which I gave you – I fed you fine flour, oil, and honey – you gave it to them as a pleasing scent, *and it was;*” the declaration of the Lord Yahweh (Ezek 16:15-19).

Similar behaviour is exhibited by Oholibah, who represents Jerusalem in Ezekiel 23. For example, Ezekiel 23:40-44 describes a scene of debauchery:

וְאִם כִּי תִשְׁלַחְנָה לְאֲנָשִׁים בָּאִים מִמֶּרְחֶק אֲשֶׁר מֵלֹאד שְׁלוּחַ אֲלֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה־בָאוּ לְאֲשֶׁר רָחַצְתָּ כְּסֻלֶּת עֵינֶיךָ וְעָדִיתָ: וַיִּשְׁבֹּתָ עַל־מִטָּה כְּבוֹדָה וְשִׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ לַפְּנֵיהֶם וקִטְרֹתֵי וְשִׁמְנֵי שִׁמְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם: וְקוֹל הַמּוֹן שְׁלוֹ בָּהּ וְאֶל־אֲנָשִׁים מְרַב אָדָם מִבָּאִים סוּבָאִים [סוּבָאִים] מִמֶּדְבָּר וַיִּתְּנוּ צִמְדִּים אֶל־יְדֵיהֶן וַעֲטָרֹת תַּפְאֲרֹת עַל־רִאשֵׁיהֶן: וְאָמַר לַבִּלָּה גִּאּוּפִים עַתָּה [עַתָּה] יִזְנֶה [יִזְנֶה] תִּזְנוּתָה וְהָיָא: וַיָּבֹאוּ אֲלֵיהָ כְּבוֹא אֶל־אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה כֵּן בָּאוּ אֶל־אֶהְלָה וְאֶל־אֶהְלִיכָה אֵשֶׁת הַזֹּנָה:

And they even sent for men coming from far away (to whom a messenger was sent, and they came), for whom you<sup>711</sup> bathed and painted your eyes, and adorned (yourself) with ornaments. <sup>41</sup>And you sat upon a stately couch, and a table was spread before it, and you had set my incense and my oil upon it. <sup>42</sup>And the sound of a

<sup>711</sup> This passage switches from 3f.p. to 2f.s. in vv. 40b-41, then to 3f.s. in v. 42a, back to 3f.p. in v. 42b, to 3f.s. again in vv. 43-44a and then refers to Oholah and Oholibah by name in v. 44b.



carefree crowd was around her, and in addition to the men from the multitude of people were brought *Sabeans* from the wilderness. And [the women] set bracelets on their arms and beautiful crowns on their heads.<sup>43</sup> I thought, “Now she is tired with adulteries.” *They were promiscuous (with) her fornication, and she...*<sup>712 44</sup> Yet he came to her like one comes to a prostitute: in this way they came to Oholah and Oholibah, the wicked women (Ezek 23:40-44).

Both women breach their marriage contracts through unfaithfulness. Although the writer accuses them over and over again of acting like prostitutes (using the verb *znh* and nouns derived from it), they break every social boundary so completely that their behaviour does not even conform to what was expected of a prostitute.

In Ezekiel 23:40, the woman uses her ornaments in the way one would expect, to adorn herself, even if her reason for doing so is her improper desire to attract multitudes of men. Yet in Ezekiel 16:16-19, the prostitution metaphor is mixed up with idol-worship, and the woman is accused of using the valuable clothing, jewellery, and food provisions she received as wedding gifts from her husband to feed, clothe, and adorn male images instead of herself.<sup>713</sup>

In the metaphor of Ezekiel 23, the woman prepares for her seductive encounters in several ways. To make her body attractive to potential suitors, she bathes herself, paints her eyes, and adorns herself with ornaments. To make the setting appealing, she reclines upon a “stately” couch or bed with a table arranged before it, featuring incense and oil.

---

<sup>712</sup> This sentence is fragmentary: combined with the continual switching of persons noted above, it is suggestive of textual corruption.

<sup>713</sup> The ambiguity of the word *bāmôt*, which can mean both a ritual high place and a pedestal for prostitution, is intentional here (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 488). Odell (“Fragments of Traumatic Memory,” 117) interprets the *šalmê zākār* in 16:17 as Neo-Assyrian royal statues representing the draining of Judean resources for the benefit of the empire rather than the city. Whether the images represented political leaders, deities, or phallic images for the women’s enjoyment, the issue at hand in Ezekiel’s metaphor is the wife’s devotion of the material wealth she gained through marriage to someone or something outside of the marriage.

Ezekiel 23 does not make this explicit, but these luxury items are either from or intended for Yahweh since they are twice designated “*my incense and my oil*.” In exchange, the woman receives bracelets and crowns from her lovers.

The various components of her preparation for her sexual encounters find parallels elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible and deuterio-canonical literature. Both the woman in Ezekiel 23 and Judith, in preparation to seduce Holofernes, begin their grooming process by bathing. In Jeremiah 4:30, a woman again symbolising Jerusalem is accused of enlarging her eyes with paint to attract lovers, and in 2 Kings 9:30, Jezebel puts antimony on her eyes.<sup>714</sup> And in the same verse, as well as in the marriage metaphor of Hosea 2:13 and in the story of Judith, the woman puts on her jewellery in order, as Judith 10:4 puts it, “to entice the eyes of all the men who might see her.” As for creating an appropriately seductive setting, in Proverbs 7:16-17 the “foreign woman” tempts foolish young men by adorning her couch with luxurious fabrics and perfumes.

However, the components of these preparations do not differ greatly from those of the preparations for the wedding night in Ezekiel 16:9-13. The wedding grooming that takes place has more in common with Judith’s preparations for seduction than Ezekiel 23 does: in addition to bathing and wearing ornaments, bracelets, and a crown, which all three texts have in common, Ezekiel 16:9-13 and Judith 10:3-4 both also mention anointing with oil, wearing fine clothes, and putting on sandals, necklaces, earrings, and

---

<sup>714</sup> In both these verses, the phrasing is different. In Jer 4:30, the woman tears (*qr*‘; presumably with the sense of enlarging) her eyes with antimony (*pūk*), whilst in 2 Kgs 9:30 Jezebel simply puts (*šym*) the antimony on her eyes. In a study of the latter passage, Stavrakopoulou mentions that modifications of the face and head, such as those Jezebel undertakes, play an especially important role in the visual transaction between the self and others due to their particularly unique, malleable, and public nature. These parts of the body can even be said to function as the primary symbol of the self, asserting status through their modifications (Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies,” 539).

rings. Judith 10:3 specifies that this is how Judith used to present herself “while her husband Manasseh was living,” that is, when she played the role of wife.

Therefore, the ways that the women in Ezekiel 16 and 23 present themselves do not necessarily indicate their role as prostitutes. Indeed, the tale of Tamar’s seduction of Judah in Genesis 38:14-15 notes that a prostitute could be identified by the veiling of her face, which is not mentioned as part of the women’s attire in Ezekiel 16 or 23. When Ezekiel 16:31, 34 says that she is “not like a prostitute” (most notably because she does not accept payment), it should be taken literally. Julie Galambush points out that even though the term *’iššâ zônâ* refers to a prostitute (e.g. Josh 2:1; Gen 38:15), the verb *znh* is never used in reference to a professional prostitute in the Hebrew Bible. Galambush posits that the reason for this is because *znh* refers to illicit sexual activity carried out by a woman, which means sexual activity carried out under her own authority as opposed to that of the man who was supposed to control it (her father or nearest male relative if she is unmarried; her husband if she is married). Therefore, the activities of a professional prostitute, whilst outside of the normal boundaries of social relationships, is not technically illicit in the same way.<sup>715</sup>

If the women were prostitutes, their actions would still be extreme but much less surprising.<sup>716</sup> It is their role as wives, and wives of a high, even royal, status as we saw in Ezekiel 16, that makes their behaviour shocking. They are portrayed as transgressing

---

<sup>715</sup> In the context of Ezekiel 16 and 23, therefore, the verb *znh* is the correct term for the women’s extra-marital sexual relations as well as reflecting a frequently-used metaphor for Israel and Judah’s worship of gods other than Yahweh (Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 27-30).

<sup>716</sup> Peggy Day, “A Prostitute Unlike Women: Whoring as Metaphoric Vehicle for Foreign Alliance,” in *Israel’s Prophets and Israel’s Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, LHBOTS 446, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

every social boundary, including those of ethnic, gender, class, and even age identities, in order to show that they are the most deviant members of society imaginable.

In terms of ethnic boundaries, it is significant that the women seek liaisons with foreign men. Ezekiel 16 and 23 are both metaphors for Judah's unfaithfulness to Yahweh in favour of foreign influences from Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, both in the religious realm and in the political. In Ezekiel 23 in particular, the foreign men are described in great detail and the reasons they are attractive to Oholibah are made clear. They are handsome, high ranking officials of their respective nations wearing the finest clothes and carrying dangerous weapons that have the potential to be used against Oholibah (and any of her fellow Judeans) should she not comply with their wishes. As Tracy Lemos has shown, compared to the defeated and (in terms of ancient Near Eastern gender roles) emasculated Judean men, these foreign officials may well have been attractive to Judean women, if only for the opportunity for security and social advancement they may have presented.<sup>717</sup> This may have applied in particular to Judean women who had belonged to the upper class in Jerusalem and were used to a higher standard of living. Therefore, the writer's choice to portray Jerusalem as a woman lusting after foreign men may have been influenced by a trend he observed among the women of his community in Babylonia: a trend he was eager to put a stop to in order to protect the continued existence of a community who identified as Judeans and Yahwists.

The transgression of expected gender roles is something scholars have long observed in their work on Ezekiel 16 and 23. Some have emphasised that the woman in Ezekiel 16 in particular usurps an active, even aggressive, male role. As a child and a bride, she is a

---

<sup>717</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 174; Lemos, "The Emasculation of Exile," 380, 389.

passive participant in her societal roles; she is acted upon by a guardian and a husband who cares for her but nevertheless determines every aspect of her life.<sup>718</sup> Yet as a wife, she undoes all of his efforts. The cleansing she received when Yahweh washed off her blood (16:9) is reversed when she defiles herself through the blood of her children sacrificed to idols (16:20-21).<sup>719</sup> His gifts of clothing, jewellery, and food are given away to her idols and lovers. The socially-acceptable passive role that wives were expected to play with regard to their husbands is turned on its head in Ezekiel 16:15 and what follows. The subject changes from Yahweh (“I clothed,” “I adorned,” “I put”) to the woman: “You made,” “you slaughtered,” and even “you ejaculated,” if *šāpak* (“to pour out”) has the same meaning in Ezekiel 16:15 as it does in 23:8. If Jerusalem, as God’s wife, is acting like a man, it deeply troubles the binary world order envisaged by the writer of Ezekiel. In his mind, this creates a scenario of chaos engulfing the Temple to the point that Yahweh has no choice but to destroy it.<sup>720</sup>

By contrast, scholars often portray the women in Ezekiel 23 as being acted upon. This begins with the young women’s troubling experience of having their breasts fondled before they were even married to Yahweh (23:3). Instead of being a tale of a woman seizing the reins of her own life in a manner deemed far too masculine, Ezekiel 23 can be read as a tragic story of two women who suffered sexual abuse at a young age and

---

<sup>718</sup> Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 95.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>720</sup> Kamionkowski, *Gender Ambiguity*, 161-70.

continue to relive the trauma in adulthood, going from one abusive relationship to another.<sup>721</sup>

Whilst this is an important aspect of the metaphor to bear in mind, Ezekiel indicates that he at least sees Jerusalem as being at fault through the choices she makes. Julie Galambush points out that it is Oholah and Oholibah's lustful gazes that fall upon the men of various nationalities (Ezek 23:5, 12, 16). This stands in opposition to the more normative situation where women are portrayed as the objects of men's gazes.<sup>722</sup> The situation is sufficiently chaotic in terms of gender reversal that Yahweh must intervene, restoring the men to their active status as his allies in punishing Oholibah for her wrongdoing.<sup>723</sup> Additionally, in the second part of Ezekiel 23, the women inhabit a decisively active role, preparing themselves for seductive encounters and summoning lovers (23:40-44).<sup>724</sup> Therefore, in both Ezekiel 16 and 23 Jerusalem is accused of subverting gender roles in an unhealthy way that leads to her own destruction.

There are occasions in the Hebrew Bible and deuterio-canonical literature where women taking on such active roles are praised. For example, Jael entices Sisera into her tent in Judges 4 in order to kill him in a way that evokes male sexual penetration: by driving a tent peg through his head.<sup>725</sup> Similarly, Judith seduces Holofernes that she

---

<sup>721</sup> Ibid., 194-201; Fokkelein Van Dijk-Hemmes, "The Metaphorisation of Women in Prophetic Speech: An Analysis of Ezekiel XXIII." *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1993) 162-70 (166).

<sup>722</sup> Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 115.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid., 116

<sup>724</sup> It is not entirely clear if there are one or two women in this passage; see p.267, n.712.

<sup>725</sup> Gale Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4," *Semeia* 61 (1993), 99-132 (116).

might kill him in his sleep. That is not to say that Ezekiel would necessarily be comfortable with such stories, even though they result in military victory for Israel. In Ezekiel 23, Oholibah's seductive actions result in the opposite: military disaster for Judah. Furthermore, as Caryn Tamber-Rosenau has shown, both Jael and Judith are depicted as playing a part they are not familiar with in order to achieve a greater good. Their feminine sexuality is a performance rather than their normal character.<sup>726</sup> By contrast, Ezekiel 16 and 23 depict the women's promiscuity as repeated acts that form their regular behaviour.

Another boundary they cross is that of class and social status. As seen in the discussion of Ezekiel 16:7-14, the description of Jerusalem's marriage indicates that Yahweh, as her husband, held a position of extreme wealth. Although he chose an unconventional bride – a foundling without money or connections – his provision for her is such that she “succeeded in royalty” (16:13) and became known in all the nations for her perfect splendour and beauty (16:14). It is a rags-to-riches tale of the highest degree. Having achieved this unlikely status, it is unthinkable that the woman, recently acquainted with poverty, should toss it away. Not only does she illogically abandon her riches to the undeserving; she also chooses to place herself in the liminal societal position of a woman known for her promiscuity. As noted above, she was not a prostitute, nor was she in need of a prostitute's income. The only possible reason she would choose to behave this way, and the one provided in ample measure in both Chapter 16 and 23, is her own sexual desire.

---

<sup>726</sup> Tamber-Rosenau, “Striking Women: Performance and Gender in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2015), 233ff

Ezekiel presents female sexual desire as something to be feared, indicating a masculine level of control over one's body and reproduction, but he also demonstrates the particular desires of the women in Chapters 16 and 23 to be aberrant. The foreign origins of the men transgress the ethnic and religious boundaries of the Judean community. Yet this is almost secondary to the huge number of men that the women desire, far exceeding what the writer can imagine for a normal woman's sexual appetite. The number and foreign nature of the men, as well as some of the particular acts committed in the context of being in relationships with them (idol worship, child sacrifice, giving the men items intended for the worship of Yahweh) all contribute to the women's contamination.

The language of impurity (*tm* ' 23:7, 13, 38) and impure things (blood, ejaculation, abominations) fill the chapters with reference to the women's status as filthy beings (e.g. 16:6, 22, 25, 36, 38, 51; 23:20, 36-37, 45). If she was unclean before her marriage, whether through the blood of her birth or her early sexual experiences with Egyptians, she is far more unclean after her promiscuous activities. There is no chance of her ever being able to raise her social status again. Her impurity makes her an "untouchable," liable to infect anyone who comes near.<sup>727</sup>

Finally, there is some suggestion that the woman in Ezekiel 23 transgresses even the normal boundaries of age. The first half of 23:43, before the verse peters out incomprehensibly, says, "Then I said to the one worn out by adulteries, now..." The adjective *bāleh*, usually translated "worn out," is fairly uncommon, occurring most frequently in Joshua 9:4-5 to refer to worn out sacks, wineskins, sandals, and clothing. Yet it is also used in Genesis 18:12 by Sarah to describe herself as unable to conceive a

---

<sup>727</sup> Crouch, "What Makes a Thing Abominable?" 521.



child, directly after the narrative states (in euphemistic fashion) that “the way of women had ceased to be Sarah’s” (18:11). Therefore, we can conclude that the term *bāleh* could be used to refer to a menopausal woman. Could it be that after many years of adultery, Yahweh expresses his relief that at last his wife has reached the age when he might reasonably expect (as Sarah does in Genesis 18) an end of her sexual activity? And yet, it is clear in 23:44 that she continues to act as she did before. If the concept of a woman having sexual desires of her own was uncomfortable to the men of ancient Israel, the concept of such desires being completely removed from the realm of childbearing would likely have been even more shocking.

Thus, throughout their lives, the women who represent Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16 and 23 transgress every societal boundary that would normally dictate how they could act and present themselves. The writer of Ezekiel presents this as a terrible, chaos-inducing way of life. Although it is only a metaphor, it also explicitly acts as a warning to the women in his community.

### *Ezekiel 13:17-23*

At first glance, the passage about women conducting some kind of prophetic activity in Ezekiel 13:17-23 may seem completely unrelated to the metaphorical women discussed above. Yet the message Ezekiel is sending to the women of his community is similar.

וְאַתָּה בְּנוֹ-אָדָם שִׁים פְּנִיךָ אֶל-בָּנוֹת עַמֶּךָ הַמְתַּנְבְּאוֹת מִלְבָּבָן וְהִנָּבֵא עֲלֵיהֶן: וְאָמַרְתְּ כֹה-אָמַר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה הֵן הֵיוּ לְמַתְפָּרוֹת כְּסָתוֹת עַל יְדֵי וְעִשּׂוֹת הַמְסַפְּחוֹת עַל-רֹאשׁ כְּלִיקוֹמָה לְצוּדֹד נִפְשׁוֹת הַנִּפְשׁוֹת תְּצוּדֶנָּה לְעַמִּי וְנִפְשׁוֹת לְכֹנֶה תַּחֲיִינָה: וְתַחֲלִינָה אֹתִי אֶל-עַמִּי בְּשַׁעֲלֵי שְׁעָרִים וּבִפְתּוֹתֵי לָחֶם לְהָמִית נִפְשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִמּוּתְנָה וּלְחַיּוֹת נִפְשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַחֲיִינָה בְּכַזְבְּכֶם לְעַמִּי שְׂמַעִי כְּזָב: ס

לכן כה־אמר ׀ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנְנִי אֶל־כַּסְתוּמִּיכָנָה אֲשֶׁר אַתְּמָנָה מִצְדָּדוֹת שָׁם אֶת־הַנְּפָשׁוֹת לַפְּרָחוֹת וְקִרְעָתִי אַתֶּם מַעַל זְרוּעֵיכֶם וְשַׁלְחֹתִי אֶת־הַנְּפָשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם מִצְדָּדוֹת אֶת־נַפְשֵׁים לַפְּרָחוֹת: וְקִרְעָתִי אֶת־מִסְפָּהֶיכֶם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶת־עַמִּי מִיָּדְכֶם וְלֹא־יִהְיוּ עוֹד בְּיָדְכֶם לַמִּצוּנָה וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה: יַעַן הִכָּאוֹת לִב־צָדִיק שָׁקֵר וְאֲנִי לֹא הִכָּאֲבֹתִיו וְלִחְזֹק יָדִי רָשָׁע לִבְלִתִּי־שׁוּב מִדְּרָכּוֹ הִרְעָה לְהַחֲיוֹת: לִכֵּן שׁוּא לֹא תַחְזִינָה וְקִסֶּם לֹא־תִקְסֶמְנָה עוֹד וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶת־עַמִּי מִיָּדְכֶם וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

As for you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own hearts, and prophesy against them.<sup>18</sup> Say, “Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Woe to those who sew bands upon every wrist<sup>728</sup> and make the veils upon heads of every height to hunt lives. Will you hunt the lives of my people yet preserve your own lives?’<sup>19</sup> You have profaned me to my people for handfuls of barley and morsels of bread in order to kill lives which should not die and to preserve lives which should not live when you lie to my people, who listen to lies.’ “Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘I am against your bands with which you are hunting the lives there *like birds*, so I will tear them from your arms and set free the lives which you hunt, the lives *like birds*.’<sup>21</sup> And I will tear your veils and save my people from your hands so that they will no longer be prey in your hands, and you will know that I am Yahweh.<sup>22</sup> Because of [your] disheartening the righteous (with) deception, though I did not cause him pain, and strengthening the hands of the wicked without his turning from his wicked way to preserve himself, you will no longer see emptiness nor conduct divination, and I will deliver my people from your hand and you will know that I am Yahweh” (Ezek 13:17-23).

It is now widely agreed in the scholarship that distinguishing between “legitimate” prophecy on the one hand and “illegitimate” magic on the other is an anachronistic framework that should not be used to interpret biblical passages such as this one.<sup>729</sup> Despite this, some modern commentators still fall into the trap of taking Ezekiel’s report at face value and assuming the women are conducting some kind of non-Yahwistic magical activity. They label them “witches,” a term often used in a highly gendered way

<sup>728</sup> Literally, “the joints of my hands,” but *yāday* is probably an anomalous plural or scribal error for *yādayim*. The LXX translates it in the singular (Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 410 n.3).

<sup>729</sup> Bowen, “The Daughters of Your People,” 420.

in western tradition to marginalize women who do not comply with societal norms.<sup>730</sup> It is likely that this is exactly how Ezekiel intended to portray the women in this pericope, but that does not mean that all members of his society conceived of their role this way. It is important to consider what role they may have played in the community of Judean exiles and why Ezekiel sought to discredit and dissolve it.

The precise customs described in Ezekiel 13:17-23 are unknown elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and several of the terms are ambiguous, meaning that exactly what the women are accused of doing cannot be reconstructed. However, comparison with practices described in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern texts have shed light on some likely interpretations. Nancy Bowen has shown that there was one area of Mesopotamian ritual in which women were most often practitioners: that of pregnancy and childbirth. She links the tying of *kesātôt* in Ezekiel 13:18 to the language of tying and binding that appears in Mesopotamian incantations to stop bleeding during pregnancy and birth. Coloured threads were often tied on the woman's hand or elsewhere to symbolize the suture that was being created by the incantation.<sup>731</sup>

The Hebrew Bible may contain traces of practices like these occurring in ancient Israel. Female midwives were often present at births (Gen 35:17; Exod 1:15ff; 1 Sam 4:20), but if they did have cultic expertise it is not explicitly mentioned. Bowen points

---

<sup>730</sup> For example, Daniel Block titles this passage “Abusive Witchcraft” (*The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 410).

<sup>731</sup> Bowen, “The Daughters of Your People,” 424. Bowen adds that the mention of “handfuls of barley and morsels of bread” in Ezekiel 13:19 may reflect the Mesopotamian birth specialists’ use of flour to create a protective circle around the patient or the bread offerings they sometimes made. These functioned to placate hungry demons who might otherwise target the new-born. However, Block and others have argued that the ׀ preposition can be read as a *beth pretii* signifying payment received for services (Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, 416; cf. BDB, 90).

out that in Genesis 25:22 when Rebekah is having difficulties with her pregnancy, she goes to inquire of Yahweh. The verb used for inquiring, *dāraš*, is the one usually reserved for prophetic activity, meaning that a childbirth expert may have been the intermediary in this case.<sup>732</sup> In Genesis 38:28, a midwife ties a scarlet thread around the first of Tamar's twins to emerge, which is usually understood as a method of determining the firstborn for inheritance purposes. Yet the unusual sequence of the birth, with the first twin sticking out his hand and then the second being born first, suggests a difficult delivery that might have required additional assistance, perhaps from the divine realm. That the thread tied is stipulated as being red, one of the colours most commonly used by Mesopotamian birth specialists, may indicate its original function.<sup>733</sup>

It is tempting to understand the women in Ezekiel 13 as birth specialists. The accusation of their “killing lives which should not die” and “preserving lives which should not live” could be understood in reference to their perceived control of which deliveries were successful. As Bowen points out, in the context of the Judean community in Babylonia, reproduction was essential to their survival as a distinct ethnic group.<sup>734</sup> Yet the language of tying and binding and the use of grain in Mesopotamian incantations is too broad – and the evidence in the Hebrew Bible too sparse – to be certain that this was what Ezekiel was exclusively referring to.

---

<sup>732</sup> Bowen, “The Daughters of Your People,” 426.

<sup>733</sup> Bowen, “The Daughters of Your People,” 426.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, 426-27.

Other scholars have found parallels with female necromancers who seek to contact and control the dead for their own purposes.<sup>735</sup> Bowen sees the structure of Ezekiel 13:17-23 as intentionally mirroring the Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft incantation series called *maqlû*. She claims that Ezekiel used language from a wide spectrum of incantations against ritual practitioners considered illegitimate in order to discredit the women in Chapter 13. Whether they were birth specialists, necromancy specialists, or something else entirely, they probably served a particular need in their society. Neither female birth specialists nor necromancers were considered dangerous or evil by those who hired them. Yet by comparing them to the sorcerers condemned in the *maqlû* series, Ezekiel presents them in exactly this way. The real question is why he does so.

There are several possible explanations, none of which are mutually exclusive. The first (and most commonly offered by commentators) is that Ezekiel sought a strictly monotheistic Yahwism for his community, centralized and controlled by the Jerusalem priesthood. The women in Ezekiel 13 may have been conducting syncretistic rituals that recognized the power of other deities or preternatural entities. Even if they were operating by the power of Yahweh, Ezekiel had reasons to disapprove. He accuses them of abusing their position, as the male prophets in the first half of Ezekiel 13 are doing:

---

<sup>735</sup> E.g. Marjo C.A. Korpel, "Avian Sprits in Ugarit and in Ezekiel 13," in *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture*, ed. N. Wyatt et al. (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1996), 99-113; Jonathan Stökl, "The *mtnb'wt* in Ezekiel 13 Reconsidered" in *JBL* 132/1 (2013), 61-76; Esther J. Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Acts of Knowledge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015). The arguments that the women are practising necromancy seem tenuous. Korpel and Stökl's evidence is from Ugarit and Emar respectively, both Late Bronze Age sites. Korpel and Hamori rely on the imagery of the dead as birds in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian texts, but the translation "like birds" for *lprhwt* is not certain since the *l-* preposition does not have a comparative function elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Most importantly, the concept of the *nepeš* as a soul separate from the body is not evident in the Hebrew Bible. The 8th century BCE Old Aramaic inscription on the Kutamuwa Stele mentions the soul of the deceased receiving offerings from the stele. Yet J.D. Hawkins ("The Soul in the Stele," in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Alfonso Archi [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 49-56) has argued this can be attributed to Luwian influence and was not a West Semitic concept.

providing false prophecies for payment or in an attempt to control events for their own benefit. The reason Ezekiel knows these prophecies are false is that they disagree with his own, presenting a threat to his authority. Yet it also seems that the “false” prophets were not official personnel at the Jerusalem Temple like Ezekiel was. Their lack of centralized training and doctrine was, in Ezekiel’s mind, both the reason and the justification for discrediting them.

Related to this first possibility is the fact that without access to the Temple, the Judean community in exile had to practice their Yahwism in other ways. Practices that could be observed in the household became even more important markers of Judean religious identity during this time. Ezekiel supports these, including circumcision and Sabbath observance. These rituals would have relied on women as members of the household to keep them and pass them onto their children. Household rituals such as birth would have been incredibly important markers of ethnic identity, so it is strange that Ezekiel should want to do away with experts in rituals such as these at this critical time. However, his use of Babylonian loan words and Mesopotamian-sounding rituals in 13:17-23 may reflect his anxiety that Babylonian influence was creeping into Judean rites of passage. Thus, it was important to discredit the female practitioners of these rituals lest their influence become greater than that of the dispossessed Jerusalem priesthood.

There may be even more to Ezekiel’s disgust at the female ritual specialists. The only examples in the Hebrew Bible where women use the tying of red threads for protection are related to Tamar and Rahab, both of whom occupy a liminal space in society due to their acts of prostitution. Additionally, the only other reference to “hunting lives” occurs in Proverbs 6:26. Here, an adulterous wife hunts for men, as opposed to a

prostitute (*zônâ*) who can be bought for a loaf of bread. Finally, Isaiah 57:3 refers to “sons of a sorceress; offspring of one who commits adultery and prostitution,” whereby “sorceress” ( *’ōnēnâ*) and “woman who commits adultery and prostitution” (*mēnā ’ēp watirzneh*) are used in parallel.

Could it be that marginalized women who may not have had access to more tightly-controlled, centralized forms of religious practice often turned to other methods of spiritual protection? The women in Ezekiel 13 may not have been prostitutes themselves, but their conducting of ritual practices outside of the purview of the what Ezekiel deems the correct religious leadership may represent the same kind of seizure of power that the women in Ezekiel 16 and 23 are accused of. By usurping religious leadership roles, they upset the purity-based world order that Ezekiel is carefully trying to construct for his imperilled community.

In conclusion then, Ezekiel exhibits a deep mistrust for women who attempt to transgress the social boundaries of their gender, age, class, and designated role as faithful wives and mothers. He views Yahweh’s departure from the Temple as the necessary result of chaos like this in the Judean community. For Ezekiel, the Babylonian exile is a chance to reconstruct a smaller community specifically chosen for the task. Yet this project relies on everyone maintaining the boundaries of the Judean community, both with regard to the foreign nations surrounding it, and within the community itself. If women attempt to better themselves through marrying foreigners or exert power by taking on ritual roles, they upset the balance and, if Bowen’s view is correct, the reproductive potential of the exilic community. Ezekiel steps in to condemn this

behaviour and restore what he deems the correct structure for the Judean community in exile. Unfortunately, he does not foresee this being achieved easily.

#### 4.1.3 Traumatized Women

For Ezekiel, the Babylonian conquest is Yahweh's punishment for Judah's wrongdoings. The women discussed above play two main roles in Ezekiel's presentation of this ideology. In Chapters 16 and 23, they are metonyms for Jerusalem, particularly the ruling elite of Jerusalem.<sup>736</sup> In Chapters 8 and 13, Ezekiel accuses Judean women of conducting ritual practices that he deems contrary to the correct practice of Yahwism. Therefore, it is fitting for his ideology that his most graphic descriptions of Jerusalem's downfall occur as part of the same metaphor in which Jerusalem is a woman.

In 16:37-41 and 23:25-30, 46-47 she is stripped naked, stoned, stabbed, mutilated; her house is burned down and her children murdered in front of the women of Judah (16:41). The downfall of this woman is Ezekiel's prophecy of the forthcoming downfall of Jerusalem, particularly its post-597 BCE leadership.

לְכֹן הִנְנִי מִקְבִּץ אֶת-כָּל-מֵאֲהָבָיוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָרְבָתָ עֲלֵיהֶם וְאֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ עַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר שָׁנְאַת וּקְבָצְתִי אֹתָם עָלֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב וּגְלִיתִי עָרוֹתֶיךָ אֲלֵהֶם וְרָאוּ אֶת-כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹתֶיךָ: וְשִׁפְטִיתִיךָ מִשְׁפָּטֵי נִאֲפֹת וְשִׁפְכַת דָּם וּנְתַתִּיךָ דָּם חֲמָה וּמִנְאָה: וּנְתַתִּי אוֹתָךְ בְּיָדָם וְהָרְסוּ גִבְּךָ וְנִתְצוּ רַמְתֶּיךָ וְהִפְשִׁיטוּ אוֹתָךְ בְּגָדֶיךָ וְלָקְחוּ כְּלֵי תַפְאָרְתְּךָ וְהִנִּיחוּ עֵירֹם וְעָרְיָה: וְהִעָּלּוּ עָלֶיךָ קֶהֱל וְרָגְמוּ אוֹתָךְ בָּאֲבָן וּבִתְקוּדָה בְּחִרְבוֹתָם: וְשִׁרְפוּ בְּתֶיךָ בָּאֵשׁ וְעָשׂוּ-כָךְ שְׁפָטִים לְעֵינֵי נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ מִזִּזְנָה וְגַם-אֶתְנֶנּוּ לֹא תִתְנִי-עוֹד:

Therefore, I am gathering all your lovers whom you pleased and all whom you loved against all whom you hated, and I will gather them against you all around and I will uncover your nakedness to them so that they will see all your nakedness.<sup>38</sup> I will judge you with the judgements of adulteresses and spillers of blood and give you the blood of anger and jealousy.<sup>39</sup> I will give you into their hand and they will destroy your mound and tear down your high places, and they will strip off your clothes and

<sup>736</sup> Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric," 107.



take your beautiful ornaments and leave you naked and bare.<sup>40</sup> They will raise up a crowd against you and stone you and cut you up with their swords.<sup>41</sup> They will burn your houses with fire and enact judgements against you in front of many women. I will make you cease prostitution, and neither will you give a wage any more (Ezek 16:37-41).

וְנִתְּתִי קִנְיָתִי בְּךָ וְעָשׂוּ אוֹתְךָ בְּחֶמְהָ אֶפְדִּי וְאַזְנִיךָ יִסִּירוּ וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ בַּחֶרֶב תִּפּוֹל הִמָּה בְּנִיךָ וּבָנוֹתֶיךָ יִקְחוּ וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ תֹּאכַל בָּאֵשׁ: וְהִפְשִׁיטוּךָ אֶת־בְּגָדֶיךָ וְלָקְחוּ כָּלִי תִפְאַרְתְּךָ: וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי זִמְתְּךָ מִמֶּךָ וְאֶת־זְנוּתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא־תִשָּׂאִי עֵינֶיךָ אֲלֵיהֶם וּמִצְרַיִם לֹא תִזְכְּרִי־עוֹד: ס  
כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הַנְּנִי נִתְּנָךְ בְּיַד אֲשֶׁר שָׁנְאָת בְּיַד אֲשֶׁר־נִקְצָה נִפְשְׁךָ מֵהֶם: וְעָשׂוּ אוֹתְךָ בְּשֹׂנְאָהּ וְלָקְחוּ כָּל־יְגִיעֶךָ וְעִזְבוּךָ עִירָם וְעָרְיָהּ וְנִגְלָה עֲרוֹת זְנוּנֶיךָ וְזִמְתְּךָ וְתִזְנוּתֶיךָ: עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה לָּךְ בְּזְנוּתְךָ אַחֲרֵי גוֹיִם עַל אֲשֶׁר־נִטְמָאת בְּגִלּוּלֵיהֶם:

I will set my jealousy against you and they will act upon you with anger; they will remove your nose and your ears and your remnant will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and daughters and your remnant will be devoured by fire.<sup>26</sup> They will strip off your clothes and take your beautiful ornaments.<sup>27</sup> I will make your wickedness and your prostitution from the land of Egypt cease; you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt any more.

<sup>28</sup>For thus says the Lord Yahweh, “I am giving you into the hand of those you hated, into the hand of those who disgusted you.<sup>29</sup> They will act upon you with hatred and take all your labour and desert you, naked and bare, so that the nakedness of your prostitution is uncovered. Your wickedness and fornication<sup>30</sup> have enacted these things for you, when you prostituted yourself for nations by whose idols you were defiled” (Ezek 23:25-30).

כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הַעֲלֵה עֲלֵיהֶם קֶהֱל וְנָתַן אֹתָם לְזִעְוָה וּלְבָז: וְרָגְמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֲבָן קֶהֱל וַיִּבְרָא אוֹתָם בַּחֲרֻבוֹתָם בְּנִיָּהֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיהֶם יִהְיֶה וַיִּהְיֶה בָּאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָפוּ: וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי זִמָּה מִן־הָאֶרֶץ וְגִוְסָרוּ כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים וְלֹא תַעֲשִׂינָה כְּזִמְתִּכֶּנָּה:

For thus says the Lord Yahweh, “Raise up a crowd against them and set them as a terror and as plunder.<sup>47</sup> The crowd will stone them and cut you with their swords; they will slaughter their sons and daughters and burn their houses with fire. I will put an end to wickedness in the land so that all the women will be warned and will not act wickedly like you.” (Ezek 23:46-48).

Several scholars have recognized the poignancy of Ezekiel depicting the elite male rulers of Jerusalem as defenseless women in the face of Yahweh’s punishment.<sup>737</sup>

<sup>737</sup> e.g. Garber, “I Went in Bitterness,” 355; Corrine L. Patton, “Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?” A Response to Feminist Critiques of Ezekiel 23,” in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and*

Jacqueline Lapsley shows that outside of the Hebrew Bible, ancient Near Eastern war rhetoric sometimes depicts defeated male troops as female prostitutes.<sup>738</sup> The transformation of the classically whole, male body into the penetrable and penetrated female body of a prostitute represents a “grotesqueing” of the conquered soldier.<sup>739</sup> This metaphor usually applies to a foreign enemy and not one’s own people. Ezekiel subverts it by turning it on his fellow Judeans (especially elite, male Judeans), presenting the grotesqueing as their just punishment for wrongdoing.<sup>740</sup> Lapsley has posited a possible function of Ezekiel’s gender role reversal for his audience. She suggests that Ezekiel galvanizes the pain of the Judean ruling elite’s unhappy transformation into vulnerable, “pierced” bodies to make Yahweh’s punishment more real to them.<sup>741</sup> If Yahweh’s punishment is real, then so is Yahweh’s presence, even in exile.

Yahweh’s presence in the exile is unquestionably real for Ezekiel (see 11:16). His portrayal of the Judeans’ bodies as tortured and traumatized women reflected the pain of defeat and helplessness they were feeling. Yet he could have used other metaphors to reflect the alienation they felt in their own bodies (see Ezekiel 32 for a different example

---

*Anthropological Perspectives*, SBLSS 9, ed. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000), 221-38 (233).

<sup>738</sup> Jacqueline E. Lapsley, “The Proliferation of Grotesque Bodies in Ezekiel: The Case of Ezekiel 23,” in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, FAT 112, ed. William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 377-90 (385). Bergmann (“We Have Seen the Enemy,” 135-37) collects the ancient Near Eastern evidence, to which should be added Sefire IA 40-41.

<sup>739</sup> Lapsley, “The Proliferation of Grotesque Bodies,” 385-86. Cf. Cynthia Chapman on the naked bodies of defeated males being depicted in Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs (*The Gendered Language of Warfare*).

<sup>740</sup> Lemos, “‘They Have Become Women’: Judean Diaspora and Postcolonial Theories of Gender and Migration,” in *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect*, SBLRBS 71, ed. Saul M. Olyan (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), 81-109 (98). Ezekiel’s absorption of this trauma, even monstification, into his own body is considered in greater detail in Section 4.3.1.

<sup>741</sup> Lapsley, “The Proliferation of Grotesque Bodies,” 386.

of monstrification). There is a reason Ezekiel chose women as the subject of his metaphors in Chapters 16 and 23. These passages also acts as warnings to Judean women. If they act like the women in the metaphor, mobilizing their sexuality for their own gain, seeking relationships with foreign men, and engaging in ritual activity outside of the confines of the Temple cult (the only sin which Ezekiel directly accuses women of in 13:17-23), they can expect a similar fate to Jerusalem's in Ezekiel 16 and 23.

Ezekiel's evocative descriptions of women suffering violence in warfare were undoubtedly inspired by his setting. The memory of the forced migration at the hands of the Babylonians was fresh in everyone's minds. Additionally, the threat of further violence in exile as well as to compatriots remaining in Jerusalem may have been a concern for Ezekiel's community. Ezekiel's descriptions of women being brutally attacked and humiliated by soldiers, her possessions and children stripped away, were likely to gain an emotional response from his audience.

Scholars usually interpret Ezekiel's use of this metaphor as a result of his own experience of trauma at the hands of the Babylonians. David Garber, Tamar Kamionkowski, Tracey Lemos, and others have all cited the sociological evidence that men who experience emasculation, such as in warfare and forced migration, are likely to respond in hypermasculine ways.<sup>742</sup> This includes the increased subjugation of members of society with less power than them, especially women, as the men seek to re-establish control over their uncontrollable situation. A hypermasculine impulse may explain Ezekiel's use of such graphic imagery to describe the violence against the women in

---

<sup>742</sup> Kamionkowski, *Gender Ambiguity and Subversive Metaphor*, 86; Lemos, "They Have Become Women," 101; Garber, "I Went in Bitterness," 355.

Chapters 16 and 23, his relishing of the gory details. The experience of Babylonian defeat probably informed the particulars of the descriptions, if not also the trauma behind them.<sup>743</sup>

Yet the emasculating experiences of Judean men did not necessarily end when they settled in Babylonia. If, as Lemos has suggested, Judean women were sometimes tempted (or forced) to become the concubines of Babylonian men or other foreigners, it may have added to the male Judeans' sense of loss of control.<sup>744</sup> Ezekiel may seek to redirect the potential feelings of shame experienced by cuckolded Judean men onto the shame experienced by the women in their punishment.

In both Ezekiel 16:37-41 and 23:46-47 there is an emphasis on the women's public humiliation, not only the physical pain they will experience. In 23:25 the woman symbolizing Jerusalem has her nose and ears removed. If she survives her ordeal, she will always be physically marked by it.<sup>745</sup> Her mutilation, like the mutilation doubtless experienced by many in the course of Neo-Babylonian imperialism, is a constant reminder of the experience. Both psychologically and on a physical level, it is almost guaranteed to prevent her from acting in the same way in future. This is the warning Ezekiel wishes to convey to the women in his audience. They already knew what it was to experience trauma. His aggressively-worded message is that if they don't comply to his ideology for the group identity of the exiles, they will experience it again.

---

<sup>743</sup> Patton, "Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?" 232.

<sup>744</sup> There is evidence of Judean women marrying Babylonian men in several of the marriage contracts published by Abraham ("West Semitic and Judean Brides"), but these date to a period after Ezekiel's ministry (542-34 BCE) and only amount to five marriages so far.

<sup>745</sup> Due to their visibility and features, faces are uniquely communicative areas of identity (see p. 270 n. 714).

Ezekiel does not trust the lay-people of his community to uphold this ideology alone. Rather, he envisages a society organized hierarchically into levels of purity. To avoid a situation in the future whereby the most sacred things become profaned, Ezekiel foresees a priesthood who will uphold the highest standards of purity on behalf of the lay people. This priesthood will protect the most sacred things from those who might otherwise corrupt them, thus preventing a similar disaster from occurring again.

#### **4.2 Priests**

Priests had a professional identity within the Judean community that set them apart from others. Their role required specific training and education and entailed a high level of prestige. Most importantly, from their perspective, their position involved maintaining higher levels of purity than the average member of society. Many aspects of this special identity were expressed physically, through guidelines that dictated their gender, genealogy, appearance, what they could eat and drink, with whom they could have sexual intercourse, and which things they could not touch (such as human corpses). Some of these guidelines pertained to the everyday aspects of their lives, whilst others applied only in the specific physical spaces of the Temple in which they (and they alone) were permitted to operate.

Ezekiel is identified as a priest (*kōhēn*) in 1:3, and the book bears the imprint of this identity in several ways. Much of its language, as well as its concerns, resemble the Priestly writings of the Pentateuch (see above, pages 158-59). This is especially true of Ezekiel 40-48, Ezekiel's vision of the new Temple, which includes a law code for how it

is to be maintained.<sup>746</sup> Ezekiel is the only prophetic book in the Hebrew Bible to include a law code, reflecting the writer's deep concern for the operation of the Temple even in its absence. In 43:10-11, Ezekiel is explicitly instructed not only to describe (*haggēd*) his vision to the House of Israel, but also to write it down in their sight (*kētōb lē'ênēhem*), thus confirming the validity of the record for future generations.

The Priestly writings of the Pentateuch recorded how the priesthood should be organized in the framework of God's instructions to Moses regarding the tabernacle. Meanwhile, the writer of Ezekiel 40-48 chose to present instructions for the priesthood in the context of a vision of the future revealed during the forced migration in Babylonia. Even as Ezekiel the prophet is placed in the role of a new Moses, the writer (ostensibly the same person) fulfils a role like that of the Priestly author: encoding and redacting laws for the Judean community.<sup>747</sup> Through his visions, Ezekiel's own body becomes the bridge between his community in Babylonia and the Jerusalem Temple they cannot access. He is the one who determines which bodies can move through the spaces of the idealized Temple and what those bodies must be like. Even in his imagined future, when the bodies of his community will be purified and restored by Yahweh (see Section 3.4.2), the sanctity of the Temple will be safeguarded by a select class of Judeans.

In Ezekiel's idealized society, the Zadokite priesthood will stand apart from the laity because of their holiness. Their special status as religious leaders will be immediately recognizable through both their appearance and how their actions reflect the increased

---

<sup>746</sup> Some see Ezek 40-48 as a later addition to the book, but there is no consensus about when or by whom it may have been written, or how many layers of redaction it includes. See Nevader, "Picking up the Pieces," 268-70 (especially n. 3 and 6) for a summary of the discussion.

<sup>747</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 105; Konkel, *Architektonik des Heiligen*, 2.

restrictions that accompany their privilege. This fits with broader findings about how social standing is conveyed via the body. For example, the archaeological theorist Staša Babić shows that principles of social differentiation are both read and enacted through the body via clothing, adornment, posture, gesture, food consumption, and spatial organization.<sup>748</sup> Both Ezekiel and the Priestly writer utilize almost all of these factors, as well as the additional factor of gender and genealogical descent, to show how the priesthood should be set apart from other members of the community. As Annette Schellenberg has pointed out, scholars tend to interpret these aspects of the priesthood as symbolic expressions of ideas about the order of society, when they are actually the order of society in effect.<sup>749</sup> If the priests did not enter the sacred spaces reserved only for them, did not eat the sacrifices or wear their priestly clothing, they would be in actuality no different from the laity.

The latter is the situation in which Ezekiel finds himself in Babylonia. Removed from the Temple and the regular structures of Jerusalem society, his membership of the priesthood is reduced to the ideological. The Judeans' reassessment of their identity as Judeans under new circumstances includes an examination of the social role that priests will occupy. Ezekiel's interpretation of this role is similar to that of the Priestly writer: both stipulate that an individual's gender, genealogy, and bodily purity determine their suitability for the priesthood. Yet the two sources diverge in some of the details.

---

<sup>748</sup> Staša Babić, "Status Identity and Archaeology," in *The Archaeology of Identity*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al. (London: Routledge, 2005), 67-85 (82-83).

<sup>749</sup> Annette Schellenberg, "More Than Spirit: On the Physical Dimension in the Priestly Understanding of Holiness," *ZAW* 126/2 (2014) 163-79 (166).

One significant difference between Ezekiel and P is their views concerning the genealogy of the priesthood. Both maintain that the priesthood is reserved for one part of the tribe of Levi, whilst the rest of the Levites are non-priestly. By contrast, other Hexateuchal sources (e.g. Deut 18:1-8) as well as the Former and Latter Prophets consider the entire tribe of Levi to be priestly.<sup>750</sup> Yet where P holds that Aaron's descendants will be the only priests (Num 16:40; 26:58-59), Ezekiel states that it will be the descendants of Zadok. The reason for this distinction is unclear.<sup>751</sup> Ezekiel 44:10, 12 states that the Levites turned away from Yahweh and worshipped idols, so must bear the punishment of being ministers in the sanctuary without the privilege of being priests. The preceding verse, 44:9, bans foreigners from entering the sanctuary, which many have interpreted as the key to understanding the Levites' wrongdoing: allowing foreigners into the Temple when it was their role to keep them out.<sup>752</sup>

Duguid suggests that Ezekiel's instructions do not entail a downgrading of the Levites' former role, but an injunction that they fulfil it properly in future. The reminder that they shall not come near to Yahweh (44:13) in this interpretation applies to all of Israel, who are collectively downgraded from being able to conduct their own sacrifices

---

<sup>750</sup> Haran, "The Law Code of Ezekiel 40-48," 60. In his *Prolegomena*, Wellhausen suggested that Josiah allowed the Levites to share the Zadokite inheritance of the Jerusalem Temple because of Deut 18:1-8. However, 2 Kgs 23:9 shows that the Levites never actually came to Jerusalem, which is what Ezekiel seeks to address. Thus, Wellhausen concluded that Ezekiel knew Deuteronomy but not P (Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 9-10).

<sup>751</sup> At least one strand of tradition holds that Zadok was a descendant of Aaron: Ezra 7:1-5 claims that Ezra is a descendant of both Zadok and Aaron and 1 Chron 6:1-15 records a high priestly genealogy with two Zadoks, both Aaron's descendants. If this tradition were widespread during the sixth century BCE, Ezekiel would be limiting P's interpretation of the priestly genealogy instead of directly contradicting it.

<sup>752</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 76.



due to the abominations they conducted.<sup>753</sup> All of this serves to highlight the contrast provided by the Zadokites, the only component of Israel who adequately took care of the Temple (44:15).<sup>754</sup> For this reason, only the Zadokites will be allowed to approach Yahweh and minister at his table in Ezekiel's idealised future.

Tova Ganzel and Shalom Holz suggest a different reason for the distinction between the Levites and Zadokites. Their view is that it was influenced by the Babylonian division of priestly labour, where the highest-ranking priests held the most prestigious prebends (*isqū*) and had the closest contact with deities, whilst lower-ranking priests were responsible for preparing the deities' food and other tasks, as the Levites were. They see this development as part of a broader movement towards a Babylonian-like concern for protecting the Temple's sanctity. Just as there is a system of walls, gates, and courtyards in both Babylonian temples and the Temple in Ezekiel's vision, there is a system of

---

<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 78, 86.

<sup>754</sup> As Iain Duguid has shown, it is significant that whilst Ezekiel lays much of the blame for the exile and the destruction of the Temple on the leadership in Jerusalem, he does not include the priesthood in any significant way (*Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 64). They are not mentioned in his visions of Temple activity in Ezekiel 8-11. The absence of priests, especially those taken to Babylonia in the 597 BCE exile like Ezekiel, may be the source of Ezekiel's concern that lay people were conducting illicit activities in the Temple. The only time Ezekiel explicitly criticizes the priesthood is in 22:26, amidst a list of all the groups holding positions of power who have contaminated Jerusalem (prophets, priests, princes, and people of the land, 22:25-29). It appears that this list is borrowed from the similar passage in Zephaniah 3:3-4 [Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 72] but Ezek 44:7 may also be directed at the priesthood, since it involves violations of Temple protocol). Here, Ezekiel claims that the priests have fallen short of expectations: they have not distinguished between the holy and the common; taught the difference between clean and unclean; or regarded the Sabbath. Unlike the other groups of leaders who are accused of conducting murder, theft, bodily harm, and extortion (22:25-29), the priests' crime is that they have sunk to the same standard of disregard for Yahweh's law as the average member of society. For Ezekiel, this offence is grievous. However, given his perception of the disastrous state of Jerusalem in general and the Temple in particular, Ezekiel's brief criticism of the priesthood appears to be a recognition of their failure to stem the flow of a vast tide of wrongdoing. Unlike the secular leadership, he does not accuse the priesthood of actively leading the residents of Jerusalem astray.

priests of increasing levels of purity before any can access the most sacred part of the Temple.<sup>755</sup>

Whilst this may have been the case, neither of these factors explains why historically the Zadokites were singled out as the only legitimate priestly family. Ezekiel evidently identifies with this family himself, and it seems likely that his preference for a Zadokite-only priesthood stems from tensions between priestly groups while he and his cohort were still in Jerusalem. Ezekiel does not offer much criticism of the Jerusalemite priesthood in contrast to the lay leadership, but he condemns the mismanagement of the Temple (especially in Chapters 8-11). Whoever was left in charge after the exile of 597 BCE (when perhaps many of the Zadokites, like Ezekiel, had been removed from Jerusalem) was not conducting the task to Ezekiel's standards. Jeremiah's presence in Jerusalem as a non-Zadokite priest from Anathoth (Jer 1:1), as well as P's insistence that it was the descendants of Aaron who were the true priesthood (especially in the polemical terms evident in Numbers 16), contribute to the impression that the leadership of the Jerusalem Temple was less than united.

Ezekiel holds that in order to safeguard the purity of cultic operations in the future, it is necessary to have a priesthood that safeguards its own purity first and foremost. One way they will achieve this is through their bodily modifications, such as clothing and hair (Section 4.2.1), which have the added benefit of being visible symbols of purity and status that the rest of the community can immediately recognise. The other way is through the moderation of their bodily practices (Section 4.2.2) such as eating, drinking,

---

<sup>755</sup> Ganzel and Holtz, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," 223-25.

and sexual intercourse, by which they will maintain a higher standard of purity than the lay population.

#### 4.2.1 Modifying the Priestly Body

For Ezekiel, as for P, priests express their special status through the clothing they wear when they are fulfilling their role in the sanctuary.<sup>756</sup> Ezekiel 44:17-20 offers a detailed description of all the items of clothing the priests will be expected to wear:

וְהָיָה בְּבוֹאֵם אֶל־שַׁעַר הַחֹצֵר הַפְּנִימִית בְּגָדֵי פִשְׁתִּים יִלְבָּשׁוּ וְלֹא־יַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם צֹמֶר בְּשַׁעַר הַחֹצֵר הַפְּנִימִית וּבִיתָהּ: פָּאֲרֵי פִשְׁתִּים יִהְיוּ עַל־רֹאשָׁם וּמִכְנָסֵי פִשְׁתִּים יִהְיוּ עַל־מַתְנֵיהֶם לֹא יִחָגְרוּ בִּיָּזַע: וּבְצֹאתָם אֶל־הַחֹצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל־הַחֹצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל־הָעָם יִפְשְׁטוּ אֶת־בְּגֵדֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הִמָּה מִשְׁרָתָם בָּם וְהִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָם בְּלִשְׁכַּת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְלָבָשׁוּ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְלֹא־יִקְדְּשׁוּ אֶת־הָעָם בְּבִגְדֵיהֶם: וְרֹאשָׁם לֹא יִגְלְחוּ וּפָרַע לֹא יִשְׁלַחוּ פָסוּם יִכְסְמוּ אֶת־רֹאשֵׁיהֶם:

When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear garments of linen; wool shall not be upon them when they minister at the gates of the inner court and inside it.<sup>18</sup> Linen turbans shall be on their heads and linen undergarments shall be around their waists; they shall not gird with the sweat.<sup>19</sup> When they go out to the outer court, to the people, they shall strip off the clothes in which they minister and rest them in the holy chambers, and they shall wear other garments so that they do not consecrate the people with their garments.<sup>20</sup> They shall not shave their heads nor let their hair hang down; they shall trim their heads (Ezek 44:17-20).

All of the priestly garments are to be made of *pištîm* in Ezekiel: a linen made of flax. This is the same material worn by Jeremiah as a simple loincloth ( *'ēzôr*) in Jeremiah 13:1 and the cord held by the bronze-like man who shows Ezekiel the new Temple in Ezekiel 40:3. These instances could suggest a general association of *pištîm* fabric with those who carried out some kind of religious role. Yet it is also the word used for the material of the general garment referred to in the laws of Leviticus 13:47 and 59, which dictate what is

---

<sup>756</sup> For a discussion of the High Priest's clothing, see below (pp. 300-301).

to be done if clothing develops mould. In Jeremiah 13, the garment, though initially worn by the priest Jeremiah, is acquired specifically for a sign act whereby it is left in a rock-cleft to go mouldy.

Ezekiel's fabric requirements for the priests differ only very slightly from those of the Priestly writer. The latter has the priests wearing garments made of a linen called *šēš* (Exod 28:5-6, 8, 15, 39; 39:2, 5, 8, 27-29), except for the undergarments, which are made of a cloth called *bad* (Exod 28:42; 39:28).<sup>757</sup>

Ezekiel also has his priests wearing linen turbans: *pa'ārē pištīm* (44:18). Ezekiel himself wears a *pē'ēr* turban in 24:17, which may express his membership of the priesthood even in exile. The term *pē'ēr* could be used more generally, though it seems to indicate special status. It is worn by the wealthy women in Isaiah 3:20 and by a bridegroom in Isaiah 61:10 who "acts like a priest" (*yēkahēn*) for his wedding day. In the Priestly writings, the term used for the headdress worn by the priests is *migbā'ā* (Exod 28:40; 29:9; 39:28; Lev 8:13). The only exception is Exodus 39:28, where Aaron and his sons wear both a *migbā'ā* and a *pē'ēr*, both made of *šēš*. The term *migbā'ā* is only used in the Hebrew Bible in relation to the priests. Since it is something made of linen and bound (*hbš*) onto the head, perhaps some kind of headband is in mind.

---

<sup>757</sup> Except in Lev 6:3 (Heb.) where the priest wears both a garment and an undergarment of *bad*. The man whom Yahweh sends to mark those who will survive the destruction of Jerusalem in Ezek 9:2-3, 11; 10:2, 6ff also wears *bad*. Milgrom and Block suggest that *pištīm* and *bad* are synonyms (Jacob Milgrom and Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel's Hope: A Commentary on Ezekiel 38-48* [Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012], 178). With regard to the undergarments, Ezekiel adds the rationale that "[the priests] shall not gird with the sweat," perhaps suggesting that *pištīm* was a particularly sweat-preventing fabric. Rashi interpreted this provision as meaning that the priests were not to bind themselves on any parts of the body that caused sweat, like the armpits or loins (G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985], 484). Meanwhile, Milgrom and Block (*Ezekiel's Hope*, 178) see it as a prohibition on wearing the sacral belt described in P (Exod 39:29) due to its composition of linen and wool, prohibited in H (Lev 19:19) and D (Deut 22:11).

The importance of this professional dress is further indicated by the prohibition against wearing it whilst not ministering in the sanctuary in 44:19. When the priests enter the gates of the inner court (*ša 'ārê heḥāṣēr hapēnîmîṭ*, 44:17), they must change into their special garments of linen in their holy chambers.<sup>758</sup> The holy chambers to the north and south of the inner court (42:13; 46:19) are reserved for the use of the Zadokite priests. Ezekiel 46:20 tells us that the westernmost chamber on the north side is where the priests prepare the people's guilt (*'āšām*) and sin (*ḥaṭṭā't*) offerings for their consumption. Once the food offerings have been dedicated to Yahweh they are consecrated (cf. Lev 21:6) and cannot have contact with the profane world outside. One reason for this may be that the priests, only consuming sacred foods, maintain their own sanctity. Yet the reason Ezekiel provides in 46:20 is rather that the consecrated foods do not improperly consecrate the people in the outer court. The same reason is provided for the priests changing their clothing in 44:19: that their sacred garments do not consecrate the people outside of the inner court (cf. Lev 10:7). Ezekiel 42:14 does not mention this reasoning explicitly, but brings the acts of sacred clothing and eating together.

בבָּאֵם הַפְּנִימִים וְלֹא־יֵצְאוּ מִהַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־הַחֹצֵר הַחַיצוֹנָה וְשָׁם יִנְחוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁרְתוּ בָּהֶן כִּי־קִדְשׁ הִנֵּה יִלְבָּשׁוּ  
[וְ]לְבָשׁוּ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְקָרְבוּ אֶל־אֲשֶׁר לָעָם:

When the priests enter [the chambers], they shall not go out of the holy (place) to the outer court without resting their garments in which they ministered there, for they are

<sup>758</sup> Compare to the garments of the Sargonid-era *bārû* diviners of Shamash, who were not allowed to wear their ordinary, “soiled” clothing whilst conducting extispicy (Ivan Starr, *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, SAA 4 [Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990], xxiv). The mention of the clothing of the Shamash diviners occurs as part of the “standard *ezib*,” the overriding concern of which is the proper form of the ritual and the cultic purity of everything connected with the inspection of the sheep’s liver. *Ezibs* 6 and 7 state that the divination is void if either the haruspex or his assistant is dressed in their ordinary, soiled garments; have eaten, drunk, or touched anything unclean; seen terror at night; touched offerings or vessels; or changed the ritual proceedings (xxiii-xxvi). In the Priestly writings of the Hebrew Bible, priests must also wash before putting on special clothes to serve at sanctuary (Schellenberg, “More Than Spirit,” 167; Exod 29:4; 30:19-21; 40:12, 30-32; Lev 8:6; 16:4).

holy. They shall wear other clothes when they draw near to where the people are (Ezek 42:14).

This verse refers to the activities of the Zadokite priests in the same chambers where the people's offerings are deposited for the priests' consumption (42:13). The holiness of the garments (42:14) befits the holiness of the setting (42:13) and of the food (46:20). The bodies of the priests must conform to the purity of the place and the food by being clad in the clothes that identify them as the set-apart clan of Zadok. The clothing, the space, and the food all maintain their nature as set apart through lack of contact with the profane outside world. Since purity is more powerful than impurity in Ezekiel's idealized future, the danger is not that the holy things will be profaned (as they are in Ezekiel's present, especially in the vision of Ezek 8; cf. Hag 2:12) but rather that they will come into contact with that which is not properly prepared for them.<sup>759</sup>

The Priestly writer reflects a similar concern for keeping separate the holy things associated with the sin offering. In Leviticus 6:20 (Heb.), anything which the sin offering touches (which should only ever be the priests' bodies) is sanctified. If any of the blood of the offering gets onto the Aaronid priests' clothing, they can only remove it in a holy place so that there is no chance of it contacting something which has not been prepared for it. Similarly, priests who are ministering in the sanctuary cannot leave whilst the holy oil of anointing is still on them (Lev 10:7; 21:12). The priests, by virtue of their Aaronid heritage and conduct, are prepared to make contact with holy things where ordinary

---

<sup>759</sup> Holy things carry a power which can be dangerous if not correctly handled. This is demonstrated in several places in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in 1 Samuel 21:5-6 David and his men are permitted to eat the holy bread offered to Yahweh only because they have abstained from women and kept their vessels holy. The suggestion is that had they not done these things, they would have been unprepared to receive the holy bread, and it would have been dangerous to them. Another example is that when King Uzziah improperly burns incense for Yahweh, he is struck with leprosy as a punishment (2 Chron 26:18-21).

people are not, according to P. This is proven in Leviticus 12:4 and Numbers 9:6-7, which state that ordinary people cannot celebrate Passover or another feast that would require them to enter the sanctuary if they are in an impure state. Ezekiel's rules about the priestly garments show that he shares the Priestly writer's concerns about impure things coming into contact with pure ones unprepared.

The final aspect of the priestly appearance which the instructions of Ezekiel 44:17-20 dictate is that of hair styling. Ezekiel is told that the Zadokite priests must not shave their heads (*rō 'šām lō' yēgallēhū*) nor let their hair hang down (*pera ' lō' yēšallēhū*); instead, they must trim their heads (*kāsôm yiksēmū 'et ro 'šêhem*; 44:20).<sup>760</sup> It seems that what Ezekiel had in mind was a short, tidy haircut. Such a hairstyle was significant for indicating the priest's dedication to his role and nothing else. Shaved hair or baldness was associated with mourning in the ancient Near East, as indicated in Ezekiel 7:18.<sup>761</sup> The practice was prohibited for the Israelites in some parts of the Hebrew Bible, including Deuteronomy 14:1 and Leviticus 19:27, perhaps due to association with non-Yahwistic rituals.<sup>762</sup> Yet clearly the association between mourning and removal of hair prevailed in Judean culture. In Leviticus 21:1-5, the removal of hair is also forbidden to priests due to

---

<sup>760</sup> Since this verse does not strictly concern the process of entering and leaving the inner court, some see it as a later addition (e.g. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 485). Yet it is related, because Ezekiel expects a priest working at the Temple to maintain a specific hairstyle as part of his priestly uniform. Neatly trimmed hair, like clothing, is a symbol of the priest's role and his readiness to come into contact with what is holy.

<sup>761</sup> E.g. TCL 3 412: "There is a posthumous son of his, he is still wearing his hair, let them shave him." Cf. CT 53 149:11; Parpola SAA 10 96, 97; ABL 43 r. 25. The association between hair removal and distress also occurs in "The Poor Man of Nippur," which says: "he tore off his headdress and plucked out his hair" (AnSt 6 156).

<sup>762</sup> For example, Cooke suggests the Arab custom of cutting off one's hair and putting it on the tomb of the recently deceased to form a link between the living and the dead (Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 485).

its connection to mourning and the implied contact with a corpse that would render a priest unclean.<sup>763</sup>

As for hair that hung down, this may have been associated with Nazirites, who were forbidden to cut their hair whilst under their vow (including in the instance of any family member's death) according to Numbers 6:5-7.<sup>764</sup> Ezekiel may have considered the social identity of a Nazirite as incompatible with that of a Zadokite priest, though it is not clear exactly why.<sup>765</sup> Alternatively, long hair hanging down may have been considered a sign of unkemptness not befitting entrance to the Temple.

Overall, Ezekiel and the Priestly writer take similar approaches to an idealised priestly appearance.<sup>766</sup> Yet there is one significant difference, which is that P describes Aaron as a high-priestly figure set above the other priests (his sons) through his clothing and anointing. He wears the *ššš-nezer* diadem and a breastplate bearing twelve precious stones to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod 28:9-30). By contrast, Ezekiel never mentions the role of High Priest. There is, however, a mysterious mention of the precious stones of the High Priest's breastplate in a completely different context in Ezekiel 28:11-13. This passage describes the King of Tyre in an obscure way: as a bejewelled being who was present in the garden of Eden. The Masoretic Text of this passage has the king

---

<sup>763</sup> See Section 4.2.2. Note that Lev 19:27 and 21:1-5 are both traditionally considered H passages.

<sup>764</sup> The only exception is if someone dies very suddenly beside a Nazirite and he has no control over being defiled by the corpse; in that case, he is permitted to shave his head according to Num 6:9.

<sup>765</sup> Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 485.

<sup>766</sup> The difference in terminology regarding fabrics and headdresses could reflect a different time or place of composition, or at least the intention of making it appear this way (i.e. P attributing his precepts to Moses and the wilderness period).



covered in nine of the twelve precious stones which are on the High Priest's breastplate, but the Greek lists all twelve.

Ezekiel 28:11-13 suggests that the King of Tyre was created at the beginning of the world, like Adam, and the stones "were established" (*kônānû*) for him at this time. It is unclear why Ezekiel should associate the precious stones of Aaron's breastplate with the King of Tyre. Much of the workmanship of Solomon's Temple was said to be conducted by Phoenicians (1 Kgs 5:1). Yet presumably this would not have included the High Priest's breastplate, which is mentioned in P as dating to the Tabernacle period.

Perhaps Ezekiel intended to convey that the Aaronid priesthood was subject to foreign, specifically Phoenician, influence. Tyre was one of the primary targets of Ezekiel's vitriol against foreign nations.<sup>767</sup> It would have served two of Ezekiel's purposes to suggest a link between this foreign enemy and the Aaronid priestly ideology he sought to replace with the Zadokite one. However, Ezekiel never acknowledges the Aaronid priesthood at all. Instead, he does away with the position of High Priest when he idealizes a perfect future Temple. All of the Zadokite priests are equally holy for Ezekiel; none of them wear dazzling breastplates of jewels. Nevertheless, the High Priesthood as an office carried great power throughout the Second Temple period. Ezekiel's ideology, in this instance, lost out to that of the Priestly writer.

It is evident that Ezekiel considered himself a Zadokite, based on his view that Zadokites are the only true priests and his self-identification as a *kōhēn*. The extent to which he was able to continue carrying out his priestly role in exile must have been minimal. Without a Temple, he would not have been able to conduct sacrifices or

---

<sup>767</sup> See Section 2.3.3.

consume offerings on behalf of the people. However, he may have maintained some of the practices of priestly appearance even in Babylonia. Ezekiel wears the *pē'ēr* headdress, the same term he uses for the headwear of the future priesthood (Ezek 24:17). When his wife dies, he does not mourn her, observing his own stipulations for the priesthood: Ezekiel 44:25 states that priests may only approach the corpse of their parent, child, brother, or unmarried sister; wives are not listed as one of the exceptions to the priestly prohibition against approaching corpses (cf. Lev 21:4).

In Ezekiel 44:20, priests are always forbidden from shaving their heads in mourning. Yahweh's instruction that Ezekiel keep his turban on his head as normal is presented as a sign to the people in 24:17-23. Yet Ezekiel's observance of this act complies with what would normally be expected of a priest according to his own precepts, as well as those of the Priestly writer. Therefore, it must have been Yahweh's specific instruction that Ezekiel go about his regular daily business after his wife's death, not making even a sound of protest (24:17), that prompted Ezekiel's audience to ask, "Will you not tell us what these things are you are doing for us?" (24:19).

In contrast to his lack of reaction to his wife's death, Ezekiel is forced to shave his head as part of a sign symbolizing the death of the majority of Judeans. This demonstrates that whereas Ezekiel will not alter his priestly appearance for personal reasons (the death of his wife), he alters it upon Yahweh's instruction as part of his role as a prophet.<sup>768</sup> Yet appearance was not the only way in which priestly bodies were distinguished from non-priestly bodies in Ezekiel's ideology: there were several other customs through which priests were to express their special status.

---

<sup>768</sup> The interplay between Ezekiel's roles as priest and as prophet are discussed in Section 4.3.

#### 4.2.2 Purifying the Priestly Body

In addition to their dress, Ezekiel expects priests to maintain a higher standard of purity than other members of society. In her study on how concepts of ritual purity pervade everyday life, Mary Douglas showed that dirt is whatever is considered to offend against order. Efforts to eliminate it equate to efforts to organize the environment, creating a unity of experience which strengthens the pervading ideology.<sup>769</sup> Daniel Smith-Christopher claims that minority groups, such as the Judeans in Babylonia, would feel the danger of impurity permeating their group boundaries especially keenly.<sup>770</sup> He focuses on the Priestly laws, which he considers to have been compiled during the exile, suggesting that the association between holiness and separation was inspired by the concern to maintain boundaries between the Judeans and those surrounding them. For example, Leviticus 11 has much more detailed purity laws concerning food than the corresponding passage in Deuteronomy 14. Other forced migrant communities developed similar rituals of separation between themselves and the rest of society to cope with their own fears of impurity.<sup>771</sup>

Defining what is clean and what is unclean for members of the group is an important part of drawing the boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Ideas about pollution are extremely influential for the ideology and behaviour of a community. Mary Douglas showed that people are likely to condemn any object or idea which seems to contradict

---

<sup>769</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 2.

<sup>770</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 12.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 12, 145-49.

the boundaries between clean and unclean.<sup>772</sup> This situation is reflected in Carly Crouch's work on how feelings of disgust influence the concept of *tô 'ēbâ* in the Hebrew Bible. She notes that the term *tô 'ēbâ* occurs with particular frequency in Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, both of which reflect periods during which Judah was in constant contact with foreigners.<sup>773</sup> Likewise, Smith-Christopher interprets Ezekiel's visions of the defiled Temple in Chapters 8-10 as reflecting the feelings of horror inspired by impurity that must have been prevalent among those forcibly removed to an unclean land.<sup>774</sup>

The human body represents a boundary in itself: the frontier between a person and the world around them. For this reason, anything that can enter and leave the body, passing through the gaps in its boundaries, is considered particularly suspect in terms of purity guidelines. Food, drink, and bodily fluids all fall into this category. Yet as discussed with regard to clothing, in certain circumstances sanctity and pollution can be conveyed by the mere proximity of one to the other. Because of this, geographic boundaries are sometimes necessary to demarcate areas of particular cleanliness or uncleanliness.

Ezekiel's imagined Temple is a perfect example: it is situated in a specific geographic location within the idealised land of Israel, which conveys both the history and power-structure of the sanctuary. Its architecture is an example of physical markers being used to separate areas of increasing sanctity.<sup>775</sup> Walls and gates are positioned

---

<sup>772</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36.

<sup>773</sup> Crouch, "What Makes a Thing Abominable?" 523, 532-36.

<sup>774</sup> Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 145.

<sup>775</sup> Ganzel and Holz, "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context," 222.

between the general population and the priesthood, and between the priesthood and the Holy of Holies, the place whose purity is most protected (Ezek 40:5-41:11). The Zadokite priests move and act in an area of increased purity from the general population.

Therefore, their bodies must be prepared to encounter this higher level of purity. This avoids a situation whereby they might endanger the sanctity of the place, and vice versa.<sup>776</sup> In order to maintain the correct levels of purity as envisioned by Ezekiel, the activities of the Zadokite priests are more restricted than those of average people.

Firstly, the activities of eating and drinking are restricted, as laid out in Ezekiel 44:21 and 29-31:

וַיֵּן לֹא־יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל־כֹּהֵן בְּבֹאֵם אֶל־הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית:

No priest shall drink wine when they come into the inner court. (Ezek 44:21).

הַמִּנְחָה וְהַחֲטָאת וְהָאֵשֶׁם הָמָּה יֹאכְלוּם וְכָל־חֶרֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לָהֶם יִהְיֶה: וְרֹאשִׁית כָּל־בְּכוּרֵי כָל וְכָל־תְּרוּמַת כָּל מִכֶּלֶת תְּרוּמוֹתֵיכֶם לַכֹּהֲנִים יִהְיֶה וְרֹאשִׁית עֲרֻסוֹתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לָפָנָיו לַהֲגִים בְּרֹכָה אֶל־בֵּיתִי: כָּל־גְּבִלָה וְטִרְפָּה מִן־הָעוֹף וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה לֹא יֹאכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים:

They shall eat the offering and sin offering and guilt offering, and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. The first of all the first fruits of every kind and all of every offering from all your offerings shall belong to the priests, and you shall give the first of your dough to the priest in order that a blessing will rest on your house. The priests shall not eat any carcass or prey from any bird or animal (Ezek 44:29-31).

Priests are never allowed to eat the carcass or prey of an animal or bird, according to

Ezekiel 44:31 (cf. Ezek 4:14).<sup>777</sup> But when ministering in the inner court, there is the

---

<sup>776</sup> Schellenberg, "More Than Spirit," 169.

<sup>777</sup> Other passages from P, H, and Deuteronomy forbid all Israelites from eating the carcasses of dead animals, e.g. Exod 22:30; Lev 11:39-40; 17:15-16; 22:8-9; Deut 14:21 (which says such meat can be sold to non-Israelites). According to Lev 22:8-9, a lay Israelite who breaks this rule will become impure, whereas a priest who does so must be punished with death.

additional restriction of refraining from wine (44:21). The reason for this is to prepare the body to receive the offering (*minḥā*), sin offering (*ḥaṭṭā't*), guilt offering (*'āšām*), and every devoted thing (*kol ḥērem bēyisrā'ēl*). These consecrated foods are holy and cannot come into contact with anything unclean, as discussed above. They can only be consumed by priests and, moreover, priests who have prepared their bodies to ingest this holy fare by dressing in their garb of clean linen and refraining from wine.<sup>778</sup>

Wine is not considered unclean anywhere in the Hebrew Bible, but it is forbidden to be consumed by priests on duty in the Priestly passages of Leviticus 10:9 and Numbers 6:3. It is also abstained from by Nazirites who have taken a vow (Num 6:4; Amos 2:12). The reason it is forbidden in these circumstances is most likely because of its alcoholic properties. Drunkenness would not be the correct state of mind in which to ensure that the sanctified offerings are treated with the correct reverence.

In addition to the offerings, the priests eat the people's first fruits of every kind (*rē'sīt kol bikkûrê kol*), offerings (*těrûmôt*) and the first of their doughs (*rē'sīt 'ārisôt*; 44:30). These offerings are not consecrated; their donation to the priesthood may be adapted from the tradition in Numbers 18:8-24 and Deuteronomy 18:1-2, whereby the people provide for the Levites because the Levites are not allotted their own land. Yet in Ezekiel 45:1-8, the Levites and the Zadokite priests are allotted land in Ezekiel's idealised future Israel, meaning there is no need for the general population to provide for either group. In both P and Ezekiel, the priests' consumption of the consecrated sin and

---

<sup>778</sup> Even in Babylonia, where he cannot consume any of the offerings made at the Temple, Ezekiel seeks to keep his body as pure as possible through what he consumes. When faced with Yahweh's command to eat unclean food, Ezekiel objects on the grounds that he has maintained his priestly levels of purity (with regard to food, at least) even in exile (Ezek 4:14).

guilt offerings effects the atonement of all the people of Israel who have participated in the offerings. Perhaps Ezekiel is operating under a similar principle with regard to the first fruits: that the priests' consumption of donations of produce can effect blessings on all who participate (44:30). Thus, the priests' bodies act as ritually pure exemplars for the community; they are charged with upholding a standard of purity that cannot be maintained for the entire population. In so doing, the entire population is purified through the priests.

Another aspect of priestly purity to which Ezekiel pays attention is sexual intercourse. The act in itself does not seem to be a concern for Ezekiel as it is for H (e.g. Lev 21:17-21). Ezekiel's primary concerns are genealogical. Ezekiel 44:22 contains the regulations:

וְאֶלְמָנָה וְגֵרוּשָׁה לֹא יִקְחוּ לָהֶם לְנָשִׁים כִּי אִם־בְּתוּלֹת מִזֶּרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָאֶלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר תְּהִיָּה אֶלְמָנָה מִכֹּהֵן  
יִקְחוּ:

They shall not take a widow (of a layman) or a divorcee as a wife for themselves; rather, they shall (only) take virgins from the seed of the house of Israel or the widow who is the widow of a priest (Ezek 44:22).

It is possible that Ezekiel understands the purity of the priestly body as capable of being compromised through sexual intercourse with a woman who has had intercourse with a non-priestly man. The concept of a woman crossing the boundary between the non-priestly and priestly spheres may have upset Ezekiel's sense of the separation between pure and impure bodies. However, he permits priests to marry women from non-priestly families, provided that those women are virgins and Israelites (cf. Lev 21:7). This suggests that Ezekiel's regulation about priests not marrying the widows or divorcees of non-priestly men is likely to be an issue of genealogy rather than contamination. If a

recently divorced or widowed woman married a priest and immediately conceived a son, it could be difficult to be certain whether it was his son and not her former husband's. If the former husband was not a Zadokite, there would be a risk that a non-Zadokite male could be raised as a Zadokite and become a priest. However, if the woman had previously been married to a Zadokite man, it would not matter if she gave birth to a son fathered by her former husband. The boy would have the right to become a priest either way.

Finally, Ezekiel aims to protect the purity of the priests' bodies by prohibiting them from contact with the most defiling objects of all: human corpses. Ezekiel 44:25-27 contains the following regulations:

וְאֶל־מֵת אָדָם לֹא יָבוֹא לְטֻמְאָה כִּי אִם־לְאָב וּלְאִם וּלְבֵן וּלְבַת לְאִחַ וּלְאֲחֹת אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־הָיְתָה לְאִישׁ יְטֻמְאוּ: וְאֶחָרִי טְהַרְתּוּ שְׁבַע־עַת יָמִים יִסְפְּרוּ־לָו: וּבַיּוֹם בָּאוּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־הַחֹצֵר הַפְּנִימִית לְשֶׁרֶת בַּקֹּדֶשׁ יִקְרִיב הַטָּאֵתוּ נָאִם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

“They shall not go to a dead person to be unclean. Yet for a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, or sister who doesn't belong to a man they shall defile themselves. <sup>26</sup>They shall count seven days for him after his purification. <sup>27</sup>When he re-enters the holy place, the inner court, to minister in the holy place, he will bring his sin offering” - the declaration of the Lord Yahweh (Ezek 44:25-27).

In this case, mere proximity to a dead person contaminates. Yet the exceptions acknowledge the practicalities of life. A family member had to see to it that the corpse was removed from the community, since its presence defiled regular people as well (Num 19:10-22). In a Zadokite family, it might have been difficult to find someone who was not forbidden to deal with the corpse by virtue of their profession. Therefore, Ezekiel resolves the ambiguity between the two requirements by allowing a limited number of exceptions.



The Holiness Code does the same in Lev 21:2-3, but reverses the exceptions for the High Priest, who is not allowed to bury even his own parents (Lev 21:10-12). As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the mourning rites permitted to priests are curtailed in both Ezekiel and H, such as shaving the head (Ezek 44:17-20; Lev 19:27; 21:4) and, in H, gashing the flesh (Lev 19:28; 21:5). These regulations limit the extent to which the priests are absent from their positions. Since the priests are responsible for the atonement of the people, any absence represents a potential threat to their fulfilment of this role.<sup>779</sup> As Ezekiel shows throughout his book (especially Chapters 8-11), when the correct levels of sanctity are not maintained, disaster ensues.

Another responsibility that Ezekiel foresees the priesthood taking on is that of teaching and administering the law. In Ezekiel 44:23-24 he writes:

וְאֶת־עַמִּי יִרְוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֵל וּבֵין־טָמֵא לְטָהוֹר יִדְעֻם׃ וְעַל־רִיב הִמָּה יַעֲמְדוּ לְשַׁפֵּט [ל] [מִשְׁפָּט] בְּמִשְׁפָּטִי וְשִׁפְטֵהוּ  
[יִשְׁפְּטֻהוּ] וְאֶת־תּוֹרֹתַי וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבָּתוֹתַי יִקְדְּשׁוּ׃

They shall teach my people the difference between sacred and profane and make them know the difference between clean and unclean.<sup>24</sup> They shall stand to judge a dispute and they shall judge it according to my judgements. They shall keep my laws and statutes and appointed times and sanctify my Sabbaths (Ezek 44:23-24).

Unlike the situation leading up to the destruction of the Temple (see Section 3.3), there will be a strong religious leadership in charge of safeguarding the proper customs. The priests will maintain not only their own, higher standard of purity, but will ensure that the correct boundaries between clean and unclean are observed by the entire community. If these boundaries are not observed, the priests will judge each case according to the principles provided by Yahweh. In this way, the purity of Ezekiel's utopia will be

---

<sup>779</sup> In H, all Israelites are forbidden from mourning in this way (Lev 19:23-24).

maintained. A disastrous situation like that described in Ezekiel 8 will not be permitted to occur again.

#### 4.3 Prophets

Ezekiel's identity as a member of the priesthood is made clear, but his ability to express that identity is limited in Babylonia. He fulfils his role as a religious leader in another way: as a prophet. Ezekiel is first identified as a *nāb 'î* in 2:5, during the narrative describing his initial vision of Yahweh. Here, he is commissioned to inform the people of Yahweh's judgement. The idea of a prophet having a specific vocation and identity within their community was millennia old by Ezekiel's lifetime. Yet what exactly defined a prophet and their role differs widely between Near Eastern cultures and generations, and even within the Hebrew Bible. Ezekiel's place within these traditions is not immediately obvious.

Prophets could most likely be recognized by their appearance, how they conducted themselves, and the locations in which they operated. For example, the Old Babylonian tablets concerning the Mari prophets reveal that their hair and clothing were recognised as symbols of their identity.<sup>780</sup> A piece of their garment fringe or a lock of hair would be sent along with their written prophecy to the relevant officials. Divination could then be conducted with the identifying item to determine the validity of the prophet and their message.<sup>781</sup> Furthermore, the behaviours of some of these prophets, especially going into

---

<sup>780</sup> van der Toorn, "Mesopotamian Prophecy," 78.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid. Van der Toorn shows that it was not who the individual prophet was that was significant, since their name is sometimes not even recorded, but rather whether their message was confirmed through extispicy. Still, the equation of clothing and hair with identity reveals how physical markers of identity were extremely pervasive.

ecstatic frenzies, would demarcate them from the rest of society where such activity would have been out of place.

Neo-Assyrian prophets may have been even more recognizable, since many of those whose words were recorded seem to have been trained professionals employed by the royal bureaucracy.<sup>782</sup> They were already considered credible by virtue of their profession; as such, their words were recorded on official tablets for posterity.<sup>783</sup> Although many were affiliated with certain temples, the location of their divine inspiration is not specified, suggesting that it was not considered a determining feature. Prophetic frenzy was still practiced, but became associated primarily with the Ishtar cult. By contrast, the gods Shamash and Adad communicated through extispicy.<sup>784</sup>

The Neo-Assyrian documents pertaining to the Shamash diviners reveal that they were expected to observe certain levels of purity and wear particular clothes when they conducted their duties in a special part of the sanctuary.<sup>785</sup> Their role as both highly-trained, elite ritual specialists and the source of messages from the deity concerning the future reflects the combination of roles Ezekiel inhabits as well. Additionally, the Neo-Assyrian emphasis on recording prophecies finds a parallel in the latter prophets of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>786</sup> It is during the Neo-Assyrian period that written corpora of Israelite and

---

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>784</sup> van der Toorn, "Mesopotamian Prophecy," 79.

<sup>785</sup> Starr, *Queries to the Sungod*, xxiii-xxvi.

<sup>786</sup> There is limited evidence pertaining to prophecy during the Neo-Babylonian period. Martti Nissinen (*Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, WAW 12 [Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2003]) only records three examples of texts relating to Neo-Babylonian prophets (Texts 130-132), and these are all administrative. Two are lists of rations and rent, whilst the third concerns a dispute over a house.

Judean prophets' messages are first attributed to individual prophets, including Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and possibly Micah. This practice continued in Judah into the Neo-Babylonian period and beyond.

Some of the Hebrew prophets also have a priestly background. The prophets Samuel and Elijah conduct priestly sacrifices (1 Sam 7:10; 1 Kgs 18:36-38), and the eighth-century BCE prophet Isaiah's call from Yahweh takes place in the Jerusalem Temple, suggesting he had a priestly level of access (Isa 6:1-13). Jeremiah, Ezekiel's nearest contemporary prophet, is a priest. Yet Jeremiah's family, the descendants of Abiathar, were dismissed from the priesthood by King Solomon according to 1 Kings 2:26-27.<sup>787</sup> Even if this event was not historical, its inclusion in the Deuteronomistic History shows that the family's priestly legitimacy was considered questionable by some. Therefore, it is likely that Jeremiah's priestly status was limited to his heritage rather than his profession. Ezekiel, by contrast, is deeply concerned with priestly issues: the operation of the Temple (both present and future), the ideal organization and conduct of the priesthood, and issues of ritual and purity for the entire community. His prophetic role is inextricably entwined with his role as a priest.

Although there are examples of kings employing professional prophets in the Hebrew Bible (such as David's relationship to Nathan and Gad in 2 Samuel 12:1; 24:18-25), the qualification of the majority of biblical prophets is an unsolicited call from Yahweh. Thus, many of the prophetic texts include the call narrative that determines the prophet's role (e.g. Amos 7:14-15; Hosea 1:1-2; Isa 6:1-14; Jer 1:1-19). Ezekiel is no

---

<sup>787</sup> Haran, "The Law Code of Ezekiel 40-48," 45. However, some argue that this account is false and that Jeremiah's father Hilkiah is the same Hilkiah who was High Priest under Josiah in 2 Kgs 22:4, 8ff.

different, and indeed provides a longer and more detailed call narrative than any other biblical prophet (Ezek 1:1-5:17, according to Odell). Both Ezekiel's experience of his call and his subsequent fulfilment of what he considers his role as prophet are described in extremely physical terms.

At least literarily, Ezekiel's entire body is mobilized (or de-mobilized, as in 3:25 and 4:8) to convey Yahweh's messages. His extreme sign acts convey Yahweh's real presence with him and his community, since nobody would undertake such behaviour unless divinely inspired. The sign acts put the prophet's body through a certain amount of trauma, revealing his identity with Jerusalem's fate (Section 4.3.1). Ezekiel's trauma may also have an apologetic function, defending the prophet against the claim of indifference towards Jerusalem's suffering in light of his polemic against those who remain in the city. The following sections consider the significance of these bodily events for Ezekiel's understanding of his role as a prophet and how this influences whom he views as a false prophet by distinction (Section 4.3.2).

#### 4.3.1 Prophetic Trauma

The sign acts Ezekiel conducts cause his body to experience considerable trauma. First, he must eat a scroll on which "laments and mourning and woe" are written. The passage from 2:9 to 3:9 describes the scene:

וְאַרְצָה וְהַנְּהַיִד שְׁלוּחָהּ אֵלַי וְהַנְּהַיִבּוּ מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר: וַיִּפְרֹשׂ אוֹתָהּ לִפְנֵי וְהִיא כְּתוּבָהּ פָּנִים וְאַחֲוֹר וְכָתוּב אֵלַיָּהּ קִנּוּיִם  
וְהִגָּה וְהִי: ס  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּוֹאָדָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּמְצָא אֲכֹל אֲכֹל אֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת וְלֹךְ דִּבֵּר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְאַפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי  
וַיֹּאכְלֵנִי אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּוֹאָדָם בְּטָנְךָ תֹאכַל וּמַעֲיֶיךָ תִּמְלֹא אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֵלַיִךְ  
וְאַכְלָה וְתִהְיֶה בְּפִי כְּדִבְשׁ לְמַתּוֹק: פ

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּוֹאֲדָם לְדַבֵּר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּדְבַרְתָּ בְּדִבְרֵי אֲלֵיהֶם: כִּי לֹא אֶל־עַם עֲמָקִי שָׁפָה וְכִבְדִּי לְשׁוֹן אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹחַ אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: לֹא אֶל־עַמִּים רַבִּים עֲמָקִי שָׁפָה וְכִבְדִּי לְשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁמַע דְּבָרֵיהֶם אִם־לֹא אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁלַחְתִּידָהּ הִמָּה יִשְׁמְעוּ אֵלַי: וּבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָאִבּוּ לִשְׁמֹעַ אֵלַי כִּי־אֵינָם אֲבִים לִשְׁמֹעַ אֵלַי כִּי כָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲזָק־מִצָּח וּקְשִׁי־לֵב הִמָּה: הִנֵּה נִתְּנִי אֶת־פְּנִידָה חֲזָקִים לְעַמַּת פְּנִיָּהֶם וְאֶת־מִצְחָהּ חֲזָק לְעַמַּת מִצְחָם: כִּשְׁמִיר חֲזָק מִצֹּר נִתְּנִי מִצְחָהּ לֹא־תִירָא אוֹתָם וְלֹא־תִחַת מְפִנֵּיהֶם כִּי בֵּית־מְרִי הִמָּה: פ

I saw there was a hand sent to me and in it was a scroll of a book. [Yahweh] spread it out before me, and it was written on front and back. Laments and mourning and woe were written on it.

**3:1** He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find. Eat this scroll and go, speak to the House of Israel.” <sup>2</sup>So I opened my mouth and he fed me this scroll. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, “Son of Man, you shall feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll which I am giving you.” So I ate it, and it became sweet like honey in my mouth.

<sup>4</sup>He said to me, “Son of Man, go to the House of Israel and speak with my words to them. <sup>5</sup>For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech or difficult tongue, [but] to the House of Israel; <sup>6</sup>not to many peoples of foreign speech and difficult language whose words you do not understand – surely if I sent you to them, they would listen to you! <sup>7</sup>Yet the House of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to me; for all of the House of Israel are strong of forehead and hard of heart. <sup>8</sup>I am making your face as strong as their faces and your forehead as strong as their foreheads. <sup>9</sup>I have made your forehead like *diamond*,<sup>788</sup> stronger than flint. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, because they are a house of rebellion” (Ezek 2:9-3:9).

Although the scroll cannot have been appealing on either a physical or emotional level, Ezekiel makes no protest. His willingness to do as he is told stands in stark contrast to the House of Israel, which is “a house of rebellion” (3:9), not willing to listen to Yahweh (3:7).<sup>789</sup> Ellen Davis interprets the scroll as containing the written words of judgement against Judah. She compares this passage to Jeremiah 15:16a: “Your words were found, and I consumed them.” Davis suggests that both passages reveal the

<sup>788</sup> *šāmîr* is usually translated “diamond,” even though there is no attestation of diamond until 480 BCE. Instead, the word seems to refer to a type of corundum (a very hard aluminium oxide, such as ruby or sapphire; in Jer 17:1 it is paired with iron). Its Akkadian cognate, *samara*, refers to an ornament or jewel (Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 129).

<sup>789</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 73.

perception that the fixed words of the prophecy were considered important and authoritative for future generations.<sup>790</sup> It is tempting to draw a parallel with the development in written Neo-Assyrian prophecy. Additionally, it would have been to Ezekiel's advantage to claim that he received his prophecies from the deity already written out word-for-word, especially given the opposition he apparently faced in some quarters (see Section 4.3.2).

However, there is no mention in Ezekiel 2:9-3:9 that the scroll contains the words Ezekiel is to speak (though cf. Zech 5:2-3). Judging from the narrative, the brief glance Ezekiel is afforded of the scroll before he is commanded to eat it would hardly be sufficient for him to determine all the words written on it, "front and back." Greenberg suggested that Ezekiel only knew the scroll contained "lamentations and mourning and woe" because the contents were summarized on the outside of the rolled document, as was the custom with Egyptian Aramaic papyri and certain Greek, Roman, and Qumran scrolls.<sup>791</sup> What Ezekiel ends up speaking is not "lamentations and mourning and woe," but a detailed ideology concerning Yahweh's judgement upon certain Judeans and foreign nations as well as his plans for the restoration of Ezekiel's community.

Thus, Greenberg suggests that the eating of the scroll itself is the significant part of the ordeal, akin to the wife suspected of unfaithfulness in Numbers 5:11-28.<sup>792</sup> If the wife can stomach the ink of the written curses that will be upon her if she has been unfaithful,

---

<sup>790</sup> Ellen Francis Davis, "Swallowing Hard: Reflections on Ezekiel's Dumbness," in *Signs and Wonders: Biblical Texts in Literary Focus*, ed. Cheryl J. Exum (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 1989), 217-37 (220).

<sup>791</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 67.

<sup>792</sup> Odell, "You Are What You Eat," 243.

she is deemed innocent (Num 5:28). Likewise, Ezekiel stomachs the “lamentations and mourning and woe” that have befallen and will befall his people, and he finds that it tastes sweet (Ezek 3:3). He has passed Yahweh’s test of obedience, and moreover, he can survive the judgement Yahweh is about to enact on Judah (unlike the false prophets in 14:9-11), though it will not be easy for him.<sup>793</sup> As Margaret Odell puts it: “By eating the scroll, Ezekiel takes into his inner being the fate of his people.”<sup>794</sup> He identifies with their trauma completely, but he can bear it.

The test having been completed, Ezekiel sits overwhelmed for seven days until his next instruction from Yahweh. He is to be restrained and lose the ability to speak:

וַתְּהִי עָלַי יָשָׁם יְדִי־הִגָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי קוּם צַא אֶל־הַבִּקְעָה וְשָׁם אֶדְבָר אוֹתָךְ: וְאָקוּם וְאֵצֶא אֶל־הַבִּקְעָה וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה עֹמֵד כְּכֹבֹד אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר וְאָפֵל עַל־פָּנָי: וַתְּבֹא־בִי רוּחַ וַתַּעֲמֵדֵנִי עַל־רִגְלָי וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־הָסֹגֵר בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתָךְ: וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם הִנֵּה נִתְּנוּ עָלֶיךָ עֲבוֹתִים וְאַסְרוּךָ בָּהֶם וְלֹא תֵצֵא בְּתוֹכָם: וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ אֲדָבִיק אֶל־חִפְךָ וְנִגְאַלְמָת וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה לָּהֶם לְאִישׁ מוֹכִיחַ כִּי בֵית מְרִי הֵמָּה:

The hand of Yahweh was upon me there, and he said to me, “Get up, go out to the plain, and I will speak with you there.”<sup>23</sup> So I got up and went out to the valley, and Yahweh’s *kābôd* was standing there like the *kābôd* which I saw by the Chebar river, and I fell on my face.<sup>24</sup> The spirit came into me and stood me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, “Come, be shut inside your house.”<sup>25</sup> As for you, son of man, they will place cords and bind you with them so that you shall not go out among them.<sup>26</sup> I will make your tongue cling to your palate so that you will be mute and you will not be a man who reproves them, because they are a house of rebellion” (Ezek 3:22-26).

The “hand of Yahweh” that falls upon Ezekiel is in itself traumatic. Elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the hand of a deity being upon someone usually refers to them being

<sup>793</sup> The sweet taste of the scroll is nevertheless perplexing. It is possible that it anticipates the restoration Ezekiel and his community (as well as the land and Temple) will undergo once their judgement is complete (see Section 3.4.2). Greenberg attributes the sweetness merely to facilitating the scroll’s digestibility (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 68).

<sup>794</sup> Odell, “You Are What You Eat,” 244.



stricken by sickness.<sup>795</sup> In this case, Ezekiel is not explicitly afflicted, but he does fall face down as a result of the contact (3:23).

His next sign-act is that he will be bound by cords inside his house and rendered mute. Greenberg suggests that Ezekiel will be house-bound due to his unpopularity with the people.<sup>796</sup> Yet as Odell points out, Ezekiel has not as yet delivered any prophecies to them at this point in the narrative.<sup>797</sup> The constraining of Ezekiel's ability to act as an *'iš mōkīah*, a "reprover," is a punishment for the people, not for Ezekiel. Robert Wilson suggests that if Ezekiel had been able to act as an intermediary between the people and Yahweh, the destruction of Jerusalem would not have happened (cf. Ezek 22:30). Therefore, this episode could be included in the book as apologetic for Ezekiel's failure to prevent the city's punishment.<sup>798</sup>

The first deportation had already taken place before Ezekiel was called to be a prophet in 592 BCE. That the book records Ezekiel's call as occurring five years after Jehoiachin was deported may also be apologetic for why the prophet failed to act in that instance. Ezekiel 3:16-21 states that if a prophet fails to be the watchman that he is assigned to be, he himself will reap Yahweh's punishment.<sup>799</sup> Yet if he informs the people of their wrongdoing, his duty is discharged and it is up to the people to heed his

---

<sup>795</sup> Garber, "I Went in Bitterness," 354.

<sup>796</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 102.

<sup>797</sup> Odell, "You Are What You Eat," 245.

<sup>798</sup> Robert R. Wilson, "An Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness," *VT* 22 (1972), 91-104 (101). Wilson points out that elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the Hiphil of *ykh* is used in legal contexts to refer to arbitrating a dispute between two parties (98-100).

<sup>799</sup> This concept is repeated in Ezek 33:1-9.

words. It is clear that the prophet alone cannot prevent Yahweh's judgement from occurring. That Ezekiel must be bound and muted in order to prevent him conducting his role suggests he has already fully embraced it and would otherwise discharge it. His vision of Yahweh and swallowing of the scroll made him aware of his vocation. His sitting among the exiles completely overwhelmed (*mašmîm*; Ezek 3:15) from the experience for seven days would have made them aware of it.<sup>800</sup>

Several scholars attribute Ezekiel's dumbness specifically to the scroll that he had swallowed. For example, Ruth Poser interprets the scroll-eating process as traumatic, with the following seven days of devastation as a precursor to the onset of Ezekiel's dumbness.<sup>801</sup> Davis links the two events in another way: since the scroll represents the written word of Yahweh, Ezekiel's dumbness represents his status as a writing prophet; one whose words transgress the boundaries of his particular generation.<sup>802</sup> He does not speak because he writes.

However, the eating of the scroll and Ezekiel's dumbness are two separate events, separated by the space of a week. There is no suggestion in the passage that Ezekiel's dumbness springs from his stomach, where the scroll is explicitly located (3:3). Rather, it is due to his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth (3:26). Although the experience was undoubtedly traumatic to the one undergoing it, it is not related to the "laments and

---

<sup>800</sup> This is the same verb used for Tamar's reaction after she has been raped by brother in 2 Sam 13:20. The intransitive use of the Hiphil participle of *šmm* only occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in Job 21:5, describing the effect that Job's ravaged appearance should have on an observer. Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, 138) notes the sense of social ostracism that the term suggests.

<sup>801</sup> Poser, "No Words," 30.

<sup>802</sup> Davis, "Swallowing Hard," 217-37. One problem with this interpretation is that Ezekiel appears to speak throughout the book.

mourning and woe” of the scroll, other than tangentially. It symbolized to the community that communication with Yahweh had been temporarily shut down: the first of many of Yahweh’s judgements that Ezekiel’s body would communicate to them.

There are three remaining sign acts within the same section of the book (Ezek 3:22-5:17). In Ezekiel 4:4-8, the prophet is told to lie first on his left side and then on his right. The first action is to symbolize the years of punishment for Israel (390 days = 390 years<sup>803</sup>), whilst the second symbolizes the years of punishment of Judah (40 days = 40 years). Ezekiel is to be bound in his position.

During this time, a second sign act is to take place. Ezekiel 4:9-17 describes how the prophet is to sustain himself during this ordeal. He is to carefully measure his bread and water (4:10-11) to symbolize the siege rations that the residents of Jerusalem will be forced to consume (4:16). Initially, Yahweh commands Ezekiel to cook the bread over human excrement to symbolize that all the food the Judeans eat in future will be unclean by virtue of being prepared in unclean lands: “the nations where I will drive them” (4:13). Even though Ezekiel is already in one of those nations, he objects to the human excrement – the only time he voices concern over one of Yahweh’s commands. All through the process of forced migration and resettlement, Ezekiel claims that he has not defiled himself by eating unclean food (4:14). This is the one principle of his priestly cleanliness that he wishes to hold onto, and Yahweh concedes (4:15).

When it comes to Ezekiel’s appearance, he is more willing to forgo his priestly customs. This does not automatically defile (*tm*’) him, as eating certain foods would (Section 4.2.2). The final sign act in the opening section of Ezekiel is the prophet shaving

---

<sup>803</sup> Or 150 days/ years, according to the LXX.

his head and beard (Ezek 5:1-4): a practice forbidden to priests by Ezekiel's own doctrine (Ezek 44:20).<sup>804</sup> The hair itself symbolizes the residents of Jerusalem: a third burned, a third killed by the sword, and a third scattered (5:2). Only a very small number are to be set aside (5:3). The rest of Ezekiel's body symbolizes the mourning for his countrymen, since shaving the head was a common mourning practice in the ancient Near East.<sup>805</sup>

There is no other part of the book of Ezekiel in which sign acts are as densely grouped. The next place where a sign act occurs is Ezekiel 12:3-16, where the prophet is told to prepare an exile's baggage for himself and enact escaping through a wall with it whilst covering his eyes. This sign act represents Zedekiah's attempt to flee Jerusalem while it was under siege (12:12), and the resulting death and forced migration that will occur there. It is immediately followed by another in Ezekiel 12:17-20, reminiscent of the one in 4:9-17. Ezekiel is to "eat his bread with quaking and drink from his water in trembling and anxiety" to symbolize how the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be consuming their food and drink.

The final sign act (discussed above in Section 4.2.2) involves the death of Ezekiel's wife in Ezekiel 24:15-24. Ezekiel's failure to mourn her symbolizes the Judeans' inability to mourn their loved ones who will be lost in the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 16:4). Ezekiel is called a "sign" (*môpēt*) to his audience because "everything which he did, you will do when it comes" (24:24).

Through all of this, Ezekiel's body is seemingly reduced from a functional human body at his disposal to a puppet acting out Yahweh's messages to his community.

---

<sup>804</sup> Although in the absence of a Temple, this may not have been significant to Ezekiel.

<sup>805</sup> See Section 4.2.1.

Although Ezekiel submits obediently to every command (except the one concerning food cooked over human excrement), it is clear that he believes he does not have much choice in the matter. His passage about prophets who do not conduct their prophecy (Ezek 3:16-21) reveals Ezekiel's acknowledgement that if he did not do Yahweh's bidding, he would be punished with the rest of the rebellious house of Israel.

Several scholars have noted this apparently abusive relationship and the trauma it effects on Ezekiel's body. J.W. Tarlin writes that Yahweh forces Ezekiel "to undergo the fall of the southern kingdom in his own body."<sup>806</sup> Louis Stulman describes Ezekiel as "a person of deep suffering" whose "pain can be encoded in his body as well as his oracles, symbolic actions, and visionary reports."<sup>807</sup> Mary Mills sees the physical distortion which Ezekiel undergoes at the hands of Yahweh as a symbol for how Yahweh is pulling apart the established fabric of society. Ezekiel's body is made monstrous to show how far the boundaries of purity have been defiled.<sup>808</sup>

Given this understanding, Ezekiel's visions of Yahweh and prophetic actions could be seen as his response to the trauma of his forced migration. Ruth Poser has suggested that his ability to articulate it through his sign acts, albeit strange, piecemeal, and traumatic in itself, helps the community come to terms with the

---

<sup>806</sup> J.W. Tarlin, "Utopia and Pornography in Ezekiel: Violence, Hope, and the Shattered Male Subject," in *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, ed. T.K. Beal and D.M. Gunn (London: Routledge, 1997), 175-83 (182). Tarlin interprets Ezekiel's body as being emasculated and therefore neither male nor female, fully identifying with the suffering of his whole community as well as the hypermasculinity of Yahweh in Ezek 16 and 23.

<sup>807</sup> Louis Stulman, "Ezekiel as Disaster/ Survival Literature: Speaking on Behalf of the Losers," in *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration*, ed. Mark J. Boda et al. (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015), 133-45 (138).

<sup>808</sup> Mary E. Mills, *Alterity, Pain, and Suffering in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel*, LHBOTS 479 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 65-66. For a summary of trauma approaches to the Judean forced migrations and Ezekiel in particular, see above, pages 48-49; 56-59.

catastrophe they have all experienced.<sup>809</sup> The normal bonds of the community which have been shattered by their collective trauma begin to re-form in new ways through Ezekiel's personal trauma.<sup>810</sup> He begins his prophetic activities five years after their exile, which reflects the fact that the response to trauma is usually delayed. Ezekiel continues his vocation for the next twenty years, allowing his community to come to terms with the permanent loss of their homeland once Jerusalem is destroyed. One of the common responses to trauma is the perversion of normal eating habits, which is evident in Ezekiel as he envisions himself eating a scroll and drastically reduces his food and water intake without physical necessity to do so.

Such an interpretation may account for the eccentric behaviour of the prophet Ezekiel, but it is important to remember that what is known about this prophet is limited to a literary construct.<sup>811</sup> Whoever compiled the book of Ezekiel, whether it was the prophet himself or another author, chose how to record the material and how to present it. Even if Ezekiel the prophet did all the sign acts exactly as they are written, their recording is unlikely have been the immediate, uncontrolled response that his actions appear to be. Certain aspects of Ezekiel's prophetic activity could be emphasized, elided, or sequentially altered to better control the meaning attributed to them. David Halperin

---

<sup>809</sup> Poser, "No Words," 40. Bowen suggests his actions amount to self-harm, one of the responses trauma victims can have to their traumatic events (Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel*, AOTC [Nashville: Abingdon, 2010], 28).

<sup>810</sup> Garber, "Traumatizing Ezekiel," 224. Though note that not everyone responds in the same way to traumatic events (Poser, "No Words," 29).

<sup>811</sup> On the relationship between the book of Ezekiel and the material world of the sixth century BCE (including a potential prophet Ezekiel), see pages 12, 44-46. Ruth Poser is the scholar who most thoroughly explores this understanding of Ezekiel: she studies Ezekiel's trauma as a literary device designed to aid the forced migrants' recovery by symbolizing the stages of fragmentation, regression, and reunification they must go through (Ruth Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch als Trauma-Literatur* [Leiden: Brill, 2012]).

argues that the writer's volatile, tortured personality still presents itself clearly through the text and therefore is suitable for psychoanalysis.<sup>812</sup> However, psychologists are sceptical of the concept of psychoanalyzing anyone who cannot be interviewed in person. These doubts are compounded when the subject lived millennia ago and can only be accessed through texts that he may or may not have composed himself.<sup>813</sup>

Nevertheless, the literary portrayal in Ezekiel can provide some insight into the role of the prophet, if not the prophet's psychological state. The knowledge of how trauma can affect individuals and communities can inform how the book of Ezekiel was organized and some of the factors behind its creation. For Ezekiel, the exile occurred as a punishment for the Judeans' sin. He and the other forced migrants are included in that assessment (Ezek 20), but he makes the guilt bearable by shifting the majority of it onto those who remained in Jerusalem (Ezek 11:21; 16:1-42; 33:25-29).<sup>814</sup> Until the destruction of Jerusalem, those who remained in the city appeared to be the true survivors: the ones who had not suffered the punishment of exile (see Ezek 11:15 and 33:24). The writer of Ezekiel shifts the focus of the guilt from the 597 BCE forced migrants onto those in Jerusalem. In so doing, he seizes control of the narrative of Babylonian conquest whilst bolstering his own community. He still acknowledges feelings of guilt that will not easily go away. This interpretation of events allows for a

---

<sup>812</sup> David J. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 3-5.

<sup>813</sup> John J. Schmitt, "Psychoanalyzing Ezekiel," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, ed. Harold J. Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 185-201 (190); Garber, "Traumatizing Ezekiel," 220-21; Poser, "No Words," 27-28.

<sup>814</sup> See Section 3.1

more stable future on which the exiles can build their hopes: as long as they continue to follow Yahweh's commands, they need not fear another disaster.<sup>815</sup>

In this interpretation, Ezekiel the prophet as a literary construct is not merely a victim of trauma, but plays a vital role in helping his community understand their situation. That he is not completely helpless is revealed by the fact that his swallowing of the scroll also prepares him for the difficult task ahead. Ezekiel 3:7-9 says that Yahweh gives the prophet a hard face and a hard forehead, harder even than the foreheads of the rebellious House of Israel. Stulman writes, "His act [of swallowing the scroll] prepares him to bear witness to death and destruction in word, symbolic action, and in his bios."<sup>816</sup> This process is similar to Jeremiah's preparation to be a prophet, where Yahweh tells him: "Today I have set you as a citadel, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against all the land, the kings of Judah, its officials, and its priests, and against the people of the land" (Jer 1:18). The divinely wrought changes in both prophets' personalities are described in physical terms. In Ezekiel's case, the changes equip him not only to grapple with members of his community, but also to survive the trauma of the sign acts.

This preparation does not explain why such extreme sign acts are included in the narrative in the first place. Since the book of Ezekiel is a written text, the task of making sense of the trauma of exile and destruction is completed through its words. What meaning do the sign acts contribute in having this explanation enacted through the

---

<sup>815</sup> Poser, "No Words," 37-41. Poser claims that Ezekiel mobilized the symbol of *rûah* to organize the exiles' situation into something that could be comprehended. Yahweh's *rûah*, which appears 52 times in the book, appears as a powerful force controlling the narrative. It activates events for good as well as for destruction. Yet after the destruction of the Temple, it is an unambiguously constructive source of life-giving energy.

<sup>816</sup> Stulman, "Ezekiel as Disaster/ Survival Literature," 138.



prophet's body? One prevailing interpretation is that the sign acts had the purpose of bringing Ezekiel's predicted future into being. For example, Iain Duguid sees Ezekiel 37 as the primary proof of this hypothesis. Here, Ezekiel brings his prophetic word to bear on the dry bones, immediately restoring life to the House of Israel (Ezek 37:7-10). Likewise, in Ezekiel 11:13, as the prophet is speaking Yahweh's words of judgement against Jerusalem, a leading Jerusalemite drops dead.<sup>817</sup> However, as Margaret Odell points out, this view of the sign acts represents a quasi-magical understanding of the prophets' abilities. There is no way of knowing whether the prophets themselves viewed their behaviour in this way.<sup>818</sup> Indeed, Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-9 make it clear that Yahweh's judgements will come to pass whether there is anyone to prophesy them or not.

Odell has another understanding of the first five sign acts (Ezek 2:9-3:9; 3:22-26; 4:4-8, 9-17; 5:1-4). She sees them as part of the call narrative which determines Ezekiel's role as a prophet, pointing out that there is no evidence Ezekiel's community is the intended audience for the sign acts.<sup>819</sup> The oracles which follow them are primarily delivered to those remaining in Judah: the city of Jerusalem in 5:5-17; the mountains of Israel in 6:1-14; and the land in 7:1-27, not Ezekiel's forced migrant community.<sup>820</sup> However, Odell herself points out that Ezekiel's sign acts involve the participation of a third party in 3:25 and their observation in 4:12. It is difficult to maintain that the literary account envisions no immediate audience.

---

<sup>817</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 104.

<sup>818</sup> Odell, *Ezekiel*, 55.

<sup>819</sup> Margret S. Odell, "You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll," *JBL* 117/2 (1998), 229-48 (229).

<sup>820</sup> Odell, *Ezekiel*, 55.

When used of prophetic activity, events identified as a “sign” (’*ôl*) in the Hebrew Bible are more often external validations of a prophet than symbolic actions conducted by that prophet.<sup>821</sup> For example, in Exodus 3:12, the sign to confirm Moses’ status as a true prophet is that the Israelites will worship God on the same mountain on which he appeared to Moses. In Exodus 4, Moses is understandably concerned that people will not believe him based on a sign they may see in the future. Thus, Yahweh gives him three signs to show the people: his staff becoming a snake; his hand becoming leprous; and the water of the Nile turning to blood (4:2-9). Gideon and Samuel also receive signs to confirm their new status as Yahweh’s spokesmen (Judges 6:11-24 and 1 Samuel 10:1-8). Thus, Odell sees Ezekiel’s signs as similar evidence that he is truly called by God to fulfil a new role.

However, the section she includes in his call narrative (Ezek 1:1-5:17) only identifies one of Ezekiel’s actions as an ’*ôl*: his besieging of a brick in 4:1-3, representing the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>822</sup> The sign here is enacted by Ezekiel himself as a visual representation of what will happen to the Judeans if they do not change course. The external validation from Yahweh only occurs several years later, when the city is indeed destroyed. When Yahweh first commands Ezekiel to prophesy in 2:3-4, he asserts that whether or not the House of Israel heeds Ezekiel’s words, “they will know that a prophet was among them”

---

<sup>821</sup> Odell, “You Are What You Eat,” 233.

<sup>822</sup> When Ezekiel undertakes the two sign acts of escaping from Jerusalem with an exile’s baggage and refraining to mourn his wife, he is called a *môpēt* (Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27). The last of these examples also includes Ezekiel ceasing to be mute. *Môpēt* has a similar meaning to ’*ôl*, but it is not used of the sign acts which Odell specifically claims are signs.

(2:5). It is not explicitly stated that they will know this because of Ezekiel's sign acts; it could also be because what Ezekiel prophesies will come true (cf. Deut 18:22).

The signs are only one part of what Odell interprets as Ezekiel's initiation process into the role of prophet. She understands the entire section from 1:1 to 5:17 as detailing Ezekiel's process of transition from priest to prophet. He is in a liminal state, which involves aspects of his previous identity (as priest) being stripped away until he has no identifying attributes whatsoever: a clean slate on which to write something new. This explains Yahweh's commands for Ezekiel to disregard certain priestly observations, such as not shaving his head and eating clean foods. These actions make the initiate identify completely with the rest of their community, since they have no special status. For Ezekiel, this involved identifying with his community's trauma.<sup>823</sup>

Identifying with his community meant not only coming to terms with the loss of homeland, property, and people that they all experienced, but also the loss of the societal and religious status he anticipated achieving. Some scholars have suggested that the ambiguous "thirtieth year" mentioned in Ezekiel 1:1 may well refer to the prophet's age at the time of his call. Thirty was the age at which Merarite Levites would begin serving in the Temple according to Numbers 4:30; it marked what was considered the level of maturity required for such a task. This might explain why Ezekiel waits until five years into the exile to begin his activity.<sup>824</sup> Furthermore, his coming of age in Babylonia would have forced him to realize that he would not be taking up the position in the Temple he

---

<sup>823</sup> Odell, "You Are What You Eat," 235-36.

<sup>824</sup> Origen was the first to suggest this (Odell, *Ezekiel*, 16). However, it is unclear whether the Merarite Levites were strictly priests, and whether the single mention of the 30-year age qualification in Num 4:30 is enough to confirm this as a practised custom.

had been training for all his life. Ezekiel would share the same fate as all the other Judean exiles in Babylonia; his special status would never be actualized. Thus, he undergoes what Odell interprets as a “counter-initiation,” in which he is stripped of his priestly status and imbued with a new one: that of a prophet.<sup>825</sup>

Yet, as noted above (Section 4.2.1), Ezekiel continues to identify as a priest through his clothing, his behaviour, and his concerns for the operation of the Temple. There does not seem to have been any contradiction in biblical tradition between being a priest and a prophet: Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah all claim both roles. Therefore, it is possible that instead of representing the whole community, his body represents a smaller group: the priesthood. The mistreatment of Ezekiel’s body unto the point of monstification represents the destruction not of his own priestly status, but of the entire priesthood. Any priests that were in exile would have faced the same challenges as Ezekiel: the difficulties of maintaining their purity and the inability to carry out their roles without a Temple. The priests remaining in Jerusalem were in an even worse state, according to Ezekiel, with the Temple completely defiled before their eyes. The priesthood had failed to carry out their role of sanctifying the people of Israel, whether through their own fault or not (and as noted above, Ezekiel avoids elaborating on this issue). Therefore, like the Temple, it was destroyed by Yahweh. The institution itself was not the problem; like the institution of kingship, Yahweh would restore it to its ideal form in due time. Yet the old, profaned structures could no longer be relied upon for the period of the forced migrations.

---

<sup>825</sup> Odell, “You Are What You Eat,” 238-39.

Ezekiel's body is a locus upon which this destruction is wrought as a symbol to his fellow Judeans, but primarily to his fellow priests.<sup>826</sup> Only once this defunct thing had been completely destroyed could it be built back up again, purified and perfect. Ezekiel's vision of a perfectly-organized future Temple does not include himself. His presentation of his role as a new Moses extends to his understanding that he will reveal the new land to his people, but never enter it.<sup>827</sup>

Just as the polluted Temple was no longer suitable to act as the protector and mediator of Yahweh's presence (Ezek 11:23), neither was the unreformed priesthood. Ezekiel's actions clearly demonstrate that Yahweh's spirit is present with him in a different way, through prophecy, and therefore is present with the exiles. Yahweh's presence is not the pure comfort that it is in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40:1); it is traumatic in itself for the generation who underwent the forced migrations. The way Ezekiel seeks to resolve that trauma through the prophet's body is difficult to witness, but it reveals Yahweh's raw presence with his chosen community.<sup>828</sup> For Ezekiel, the same cannot be said of his contemporaries who claim to be prophets.

#### **4.3.2 False Prophets**

It is clear that Ezekiel's identity as a priest had a significant impact on his self-understanding as a prophet. Yet there were other people who were considered prophets in his society who probably did not have a priestly background and therefore may have had

---

<sup>826</sup> Tarlin ("Utopia and Pornography in Ezekiel," 181-82) shows how the all-sufficient priestly body carefully constructed through purity, dignity, and wholeness is degraded and injured by Yahweh.

<sup>827</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 103.

<sup>828</sup> Lapsley, "The Proliferation of Grotesque Bodies," 386-87.

different goals to Ezekiel. Ezekiel recognizes the existence of these other prophets, but not that their messages are legitimate. He accuses the prophets who disagree with him of being false and even corrupt (Ezek 13:3, 6-8, 10; 22:27-28). Meanwhile, his contemporary prophets whose messages, according to biblical accounts, were similar to his own (such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah) are not mentioned.<sup>829</sup>

In the years leading up to and following the forced migrations, conflict between prophets seemed to reach a peak. There were disagreements between those who believed Jerusalem would never be defeated, that the 597 BCE exile was the sum total of its punishment, and those who, like Ezekiel, foresaw a greater judgement in the future.<sup>830</sup> The claim that the 597 BCE exiles were the ones singled out for punishment (as Ezekiel 11:15 suggests) must have been one that struck at Ezekiel's already guilt-ridden core. In order to ensure that his message of hope for his own small community was taken seriously, Ezekiel had to undermine the authority of any voices that disagreed with his own. Thus, Ezekiel 13 is entirely devoted to his views concerning other prophets. Since the obscure female "prophets" in verses 17-23 have already been discussed in Section 4.1.2, I will focus on the male prophets in verses 1-16 in what follows.

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: בְּנֶאֱדָם הַנָּבִיא אֶל־נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִּבְּאִים וְאָמַרְתָּ לְנְבִיאֵי מַלְכָּם שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה: כֹּה  
אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הוּא עַל־הַנְּבִיאִים הַנִּבְּלִים אֲשֶׁר הִלְכִים אַחֵר רוּחַם וּלְבַלְתִּי רָאוּ: כָּשְׁעִלִים בְּחִרְבוֹת נְבִיאִי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ: לֹא עָלִיתָם בְּפִרְצוֹת וַתִּגְדְּרוּ גֹדֶר עַל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲמֹד בַּמִּלְחָמָה בְּיוֹם יְהוָה: חֲזוּ שְׂוֹא וְקֶסֶם כְּזָב  
הָאֲמָרִים נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה וַיְהִינָה לֹא שִׁלְתָּם וַיִּחַלּוּ לַמָּיִם דְּבַר: הֲלוֹא מִחֲזוֹה־שְׂוֹא חֲזִיתָם וּמִקֶּסֶם כְּזָב אָמַרְתָּם וְאָמַרְתָּם  
נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה וְאֲנִי לֹא דִבַּרְתִּי: ס

<sup>829</sup> Although there is intertextuality between them, suggesting that they knew of each other's work (e.g. Jer 31:29 and Ezek 18:2; Zeph 3:3-4 and Ezek 22:25-29). Additionally, Jer 29:1 claims that Jeremiah was in contact with the Judeans in Babylonia.

<sup>830</sup> Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, 91. Cf. Jer 27:9.

לכן כה אמר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה יֵצֵן וְדַבְּרֶכֶם שְׁוֹא וְחֲזִיתֶם כְּזָב לְכֹן הִנְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה: וְהִיְתָה יָדִי אֶל־הַנְּבִיאִים הַחֲזִים שְׁוֹא וְהַקְּסָמִים כְּזָב בְּסוֹד עֲמִי לֹא־יִהְיוּ וּבִכְתָּב בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכְתְּבוּ וְאֶל־אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָבֹאוּ וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי אֲנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה: יֵצֵן וּבִיָּעֵן הִטְעוּ אֶת־עַמִּי לֵאמֹר שְׁלֹום וְאִין שְׁלֹום וְהוּא בִּנְה סִיץ וְהֵנָּם טָחִים אֹתוֹ תִּפְּל: אָמַר אֶל־טָחִי תִּפְּל וַיִּפֹּל הָיָה | גִּשְׁם שׁוֹטֵף וְאֶתְנָה אֲבָנֵי אֶלְגָּבִישׁ תִּפְּלָנָה וְרוּחַ סְעָרוֹת תִּבְקַע: וְהִנֵּה נָפַל הַקִּיר הַלֹּוא יֵאמַר אֲלֵיכֶם אֵי־הָ טָחִים אֲשֶׁר טָחֶתֶם: ס

לכן כה אמר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וּבִקְעָתִי רוּחַ־סְעָרוֹת בְּחִמָּתִי וּגִשְׁם שׁוֹטֵף בְּאִפִּי יִהְיֶה וְאֲבָנֵי אֶלְגָּבִישׁ בְּחִמָּה לְכָלָה: וְהִרְסָתִי אֶת־הַקִּיר אֲשֶׁר־טָחֶתֶם תִּפְּל וְהִנְעַתִּיהוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ וְנִגְלָה יְסוֹדוֹ וְנִפְלָה וּכְלִיתֶם בְּתוֹכָהּ וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוִה: וְכִלִּיתִי אֶת־חִמָּתִי בַקִּיר וּבִטָּחִים אֹתוֹ תִּפְּל וְאָמַר לָכֶם אִין הַקִּיר וְאִין הַטָּחִים אֹתוֹ: נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנְּבִאִים אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהַחֲזִים לָהּ חֲזוֹן שְׁלָם וְאִין שְׁלָם נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

Yahweh's word came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy to the prophets of Israel who are prophesying and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: ‘Hear the word of Yahweh! <sup>3</sup>Thus says the Lord Yahweh: “Woe to the foolish prophets who are doing whatever they please<sup>831</sup> and have seen nothing. <sup>4</sup>Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, Israel – <sup>5</sup>You have not gone up into the breaches or built a wall on behalf of the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of Yahweh. <sup>6</sup>They have envisioned emptiness and a false divination: those who say, ‘The declaration of Yahweh,’ when Yahweh did not send them, and wait for the fulfilment of the word – <sup>7</sup>Have you not envisioned an empty vision and spoken a false divination, saying ‘The declaration of Yahweh,’ when I have not spoken?”

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh: “Because you have spoken emptiness and envisioned a lie, I am against you” – the declaration of the Lord Yahweh – <sup>9</sup>My hand will be against the prophets who envision emptiness and divine a lie. They will not be in the council of my people, nor written in the record of the house of Israel; nor will they come to the land of Israel, so that you will know that I am the Lord Yahweh. <sup>10</sup>Precisely because they have caused my people to stray, saying, ‘Peace,’ when there is no peace; and when one builds a wall, they plaster it with whitewash, <sup>11</sup>say to the plasterer of whitewash that it will fall. There will be an overflow of rain and you, the hailstones, will fall, and a storm wind will crash.<sup>832</sup> <sup>12</sup>The wall will fall, and will it not be said to you, ‘Where is the plaster you plastered?’”

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh, “I will crash a storm wind in my rage, and there will be an overflow of rain on account of my anger, and hailstones to finish on account of [my] rage. <sup>14</sup>I will destroy the wall which you plastered with whitewash and cause it to strike the ground so that its foundation will be uncovered. It will fall, and you will be finished in the middle of it, so that you will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>15</sup>I will spend my rage on the wall and on those who plaster it with whitewash, and I will say to you, ‘The wall is no more; nor are the plasterers <sup>16</sup>(the

<sup>831</sup> Literally “going after their own spirit.”

<sup>832</sup> Literally “cleave.”

prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem and envision for her a vision of peace when there is no peace)’’ – the declaration of the Lord Yahweh’’ (Ezek 13:1-16).

First, Ezekiel claims that they speak “from their own imagination (*lēb*)” and “follow their own spirits” instead of receiving their inspiration from Yahweh (13:2-3), undermining the source of their “foolish” (*nēbālīm*) prophecy. Next, they are described as “jackals among the ruins of Jerusalem” (13:4). Instead of attempting to save the city as a true prophet would (described as “going up into the breaches” and “building a wall” in 13:5 and 22:30), they look forward to scavenging in the aftermath of its destruction. What they do say is “false” and “lies” since it does not stem from Yahweh (13:6-9). They abuse their position of leadership by lying to their community about a peaceful future, encouraging them to build in Jerusalem as if nothing is wrong (13:10-11).

These accusations are heightened in Ezekiel 22:25-28. Here, Ezekiel compares Jerusalem’s prophets to lions who tear up their prey, murdering and stealing the people they are supposed to guide and pandering to the city’s other corrupt leadership: priests and princes. The suggestion is that the prophets are focused on personal gain and are willing to deliver any message “from Yahweh” for a fee.

It is difficult to judge exactly how this practice fits with what is described in Ezekiel 14:9-11. Here, Ezekiel claims that if a prophet is deceived, it is Yahweh who has done it, and yet the prophet will be destroyed. The main issue at hand in this passage is disingenuous inquiries of Yahweh by idol-worshippers. The oracle is delivered to the elders of Judah, to whom Ezekiel refuses to prophesy on account of their non-Yahwistic religious practices (14:4). Ezekiel seems to be dictating that a certain level of cultic purity must be maintained by the prophecy enquirer for them to be eligible for a response from



Yahweh. Here, his priestly preconceptions break into his prophetic role (he uses the language of defilement, *tm'*, in 14:11). Yet the concept of prophecy being “dried up” as a punishment for people who do not deserve to hear Yahweh’s words occurs in other prophetic traditions (e.g. Amos 8:11). It may be that this is the concept Ezekiel is building upon. Either way, he maintains certain cultic standards with regard to the audience of his prophecy. He suggests that the prophets he criticizes do not, especially if there is a fee involved.

As a result, Ezekiel claims that Yahweh is the enemy of these false prophets. Not only will Jerusalem be destroyed, but the prophets in particular (should they survive) will be excised from the true community of Israel (Ezek 14:9; cf. 20:38). There is no place for those who counterfeit Yahweh’s word in Israel’s future. Ezekiel 12:24 confirms this by saying that in the future, there will be no more false visions or flattering (i.e. corrupt) divinations.

It is easy to see why Ezekiel’s view prevailed. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the prophets who disagreed with him were proven wrong (cf. Deut 18:22). Yet at the time, the inhabitants of Jerusalem must have wanted to believe that they would be safe, and that Ezekiel’s messages of doom were borne out of the bitterness he felt due to having been exiled. After the destruction of Jerusalem, these prophets were proven wrong, whereas Ezekiel’s way of making sense of the forced migrations resonated with historical events. His role as a true prophet was validated in perpetuity.

#### 4.4 Conclusions

Even though the exile to Babylonia defined a particular group of Judeans, not everyone in that group experienced it in the same way. The book of Ezekiel confirms what is known from refugee studies: that women were an especially vulnerable demographic during the period of forced migrations. Yet women did not all have the same experience: they were differentiated by age, class, and profession. Societal expectations of them varied depending on these factors. Their ability to marry non-Judeans as well as their prominent role in household rituals may have caused leaders like Ezekiel to perceive some women as a threat to the order they envisaged for their community.

Ezekiel's community was also stratified in terms of religious leadership. Ezekiel sought to assert his role as a priest by envisioning a new Temple whose organization and access he controlled. Even in his idealized future when the bodies of his community would be restored and loyal to Yahweh, the boundaries of the Temple would be controlled by a religious leadership – the Zadokite priesthood – who maintained a higher level of bodily purity than the lay population. This would be achieved through their practices of bodily modifications (dress and hair) and purity practices (avoiding certain foods and drink and limiting types of contact with other bodies).

Yahweh's future installation of a new, completely pure priesthood is also revealed through the sign acts conducted via the prophet Ezekiel's body. The way the book of Ezekiel describes these dramatic sign acts suggests that only the deity could have provoked him to undertake such bizarre activities. Like many Near Eastern prophets, his socially perverse activity is what legitimized his role and thus acted as perceived

evidence of the divine presence. This stands in contrast to Ezekiel's prophetic colleagues, whom he considers pandering and extortionist.

The suffering which the prophet's body is said to experience expresses the suffering his own community has undergone in the forced migration, but also the even greater suffering of those remaining in Jerusalem as he enacts the effects of siege warfare. This absolves the prophet of the potential claim that his polemic against Jerusalem means he is not concerned about the city's welfare. Taking on the role of Yahweh's communicant in Babylonia is something Ezekiel considered appropriate given his background as a legitimate religious leader according to his own metrics. However, he recognizes that just as Yahweh will renew his chosen people, land, and Temple, he will also renew the priesthood that has been unable to keep the Temple from contamination. Therefore, the deconstruction of Ezekiel's priestly body (such as being required to consume impure food) symbolizes the ultimate deconstruction of the current priesthood in advance of the new, perfectly pure Zadokite leadership.

The process is painful and traumatic for the prophet and his community. Yet the survival of Ezekiel's body through its ordeal, ending with his vision of a perfectly-ordered future, symbolizes that his community will also survive their ordeal. Like Ezekiel, they have been singled out for the continued reception of Yahweh's word. They may not experience it first-hand, but they can trust in its presence because there is a prophet in their midst.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

In attempting to build and redefine a group identity for the Judean forced migrants in Babylonia, Ezekiel addressed the dual contexts of their location in a foreign country and their separation from the Judeans who remained in Judah. Whilst most scholars focus on either one or the other influence, it is clear that both played an important role in the development of Ezekiel's ideology. Examining bodily expressions of social identity reveals previously unrecognized ways in which Ezekiel attempted to construe the other groups as outsiders from his own.

In the case of the foreign nations, Babylon was Ezekiel's dominant concern as the location of the Judeans' exile. Previously, scholars have primarily focused on how Babylonian culture influenced the text of Ezekiel, especially in terms of loanwords and literary motifs (Section 2.1). However, Ezekiel made use of other aspects of Babylonian culture to distance the Babylonians from his community, portraying them as foreign and dangerous. Some of these are more closely related to bodily practices and therefore would have been extremely effective for disseminating his ideology. They include iconography, dress, military practices, and religious practices (Section 2.2). Overall, Ezekiel's descriptions of Babylonian practices seem to be less grounded in real knowledge of their culture and more focused on depicting the Babylonians as foreign (for example, through an eclectic assortment of divinatory practices) and dangerous (through military practices). This should give scholars pause when considering the large number of "Babylonian" traditions apparent in the text of Ezekiel. These traditions may not be

evidence of Ezekiel's deep integration into Babylonian society, but rather of his attempts to "other" the Babylonians by evoking their most foreign-sounding (if inaccurate) practices.

In addition to Babylon, Ezekiel sought to distance his community from other foreigners, including Assyria and Egypt (Section 2.3). He portrayed these groups as ethnically distinct from the Judeans in a variety of ways: in the case of the Assyrians, it was primarily through depictions of their clothing, which highlighted their wealth and imperial control over the Levant. As for the Egyptians, Ezekiel described their bodies in monstrous, non-human terms. The same can be said of the mysterious nation represented by "Gog" in Ezekiel 38-39. All were labelled "uncircumcised" or proximate to the uncircumcised, marking their bodies as ethnically other from the Judeans.

The Judeans remaining in Judah, who had been Ezekiel's compatriots until the 597 BCE forced migration, were also portrayed as if they were a foreign nation. Dalit Rom-Shiloni has already shown how Ezekiel construed their origins as belonging to the land of Canaan. By contrast, he portrayed the Judean forced migrants as continuing in the tradition of the Israelites who entered into covenant with Yahweh outside of the land (Section 3.1). Ezekiel's value judgement concerning the foreign origins of the Judeans in Judah may have been an attempt to dissuade members of his own community from intermarrying with the other people groups around them. Contemporary marriage contracts reveal that some members of the Judean forced migrant population married Babylonians. If this practice had become widespread, it would have endangered the continued existence of an exclusively Judean community. Ezekiel's assertions of strict boundaries for his group may have been influenced by this concern.

Ezekiel sought to show that the foreign origins of the community remaining in Judah revealed themselves through that group's illicit ritual practices (Section 3.2). He painted a vivid picture of religious practices supposedly taking place in Jerusalem, many of them suggestive of Mesopotamian influence, which he deemed incompatible with exclusive Yahwism (Ezek 8). At the same time, Ezekiel emphasized the importance of certain Yahwistic rituals for his own community and suggested that those who did not adhere to them were not true Judeans. He dictated a cultic calendar which included observance of Sabbaths, New Moons, and Passover, among other feasts. The last of these was particularly significant for reinforcing the group's collective memory of their Exodus origins, which Ezekiel portrayed as distinguishing them from those remaining in Judah.

Ezekiel did not hold all of the remaining Judeans equally culpable. He placed the majority of the blame for Judah's wrongdoings, both ritual and social, on the post-597 BCE ruling class in Jerusalem (Section 3.3). Israelite and ancient Near Eastern tradition held that rulers were responsible for upholding "justice and righteousness" in their jurisdiction, and Ezekiel claimed that those in Jerusalem had fallen far short of this ideal.

Finally, Ezekiel's depictions of the future for the community in Jerusalem and that in Babylonia were vastly different (Section 3.4). He envisioned the Jerusalemites' bodies withering and being defiled; they were to suffer death and destruction. By contrast, he held that most of those in Babylonia (and even the "lost" northern tribes of Israel) could expect a physical renewal: "hearts of flesh" which would set Yahweh's chosen group apart from all others.

Although Ezekiel presented his community as ideologically united in the identity he constructed for them, it is evident that the group was more diverse than he made out.

Divisions between Judeans of different gender identities are particularly stark in Ezekiel. Although many scholars have questioned the purpose of the metaphorical women in Ezekiel 16 and 23, none have recognized their connection to the women of Ezekiel 13. Ezekiel viewed women as a particular threat to his ideology because of their potential to marry foreigners instead of Judean men as well as their important role in family and household religion. Ritual practices conducted in the home would have become increasingly influential in the forced migration, where there was no Temple. Whether women brought foreign influence into the Judean community genealogically or through household rituals, they had the potential to threaten the continued existence of a distinct Judean community in Babylonia. Ezekiel demonstrated this through his brutal imagery involving the punishment of adulterous women in his metaphors. He mobilized his community's shared experience of forced migration to warn of further disaster should the women deviate from his ideology (Section 4.1).

Ezekiel envisioned his idealized community as a hierarchical one, organized not only by gender, but also by religious roles. He dictated that the priesthood should be charged with maintaining the purity of the group once the Temple was rebuilt. Their identity as religious leaders was expressed not only through their gender (male) and genealogy (Zadokite), but also through their clothing, hairstyle, and practices of mourning, eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse, which were more restricted than those of the lay population (Section 4.2).

Meanwhile, as a representative of the old Temple and priesthood, Ezekiel's own body was the symbolic site of Yahweh's destruction of those establishments in preparation for their future rebirth. Ezekiel's ability to express his identity as a priest was

severely limited in the forced migration, but he used his social role as a prophet to communicate Yahweh's presence with the group in Babylonia (Section 4.3). Although the experience for the prophet was primarily one of trauma and not comfort, his interpretation of the chaos undergone by the forced migrants ultimately helped to restore an ordered worldview they could live with as Judeans outside of Judah.



## Bibliography

- Abraham, Kathleen. 'West Semitic and Judean Brides in Cuneiform Sources from the Sixth Century BCE: New Evidence from a Marriage Contract from Āl-Yahudu'. *Archiv Für Orientforschung* 51 (2005/2006): 198–219.
- . 'Negotiating Marriage in Multicultural Babylonia: An Example from the Judean Community in Āl-Yāhūdu'. In *Exile and Return*, edited by Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggars, 33–57. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Ahituv, Shmuel, Esther Eshel, and Ze'ev Meshel. 'The Inscriptions'. In *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, edited by Ze'ev Meshel, 73–142. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012.
- Ahn, John J. *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah*. Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 417. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2011.
- . 'Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile: Demarcating 597, 587, and 582 BCE'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, 173–89. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- . 'Ezekiel 15: A מִשָּׁל'. In *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration*, edited by Mark J. Boda and et al. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015.
- Albenda, Pauline. *Ornamental Wall Painting in the Art of the Assyrian Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Albertz, Rainer. *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE*. Translated by Green. Studies in Biblical Literature 3. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2003.
- Alster, B. 'Tammuz'. In *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 1568–79. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- . 'More and Less than a Myth: Reality and Significance of Exile for the Political, Social, and Religious History of Judah'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, 20–33. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Alstola, Tero. 'Judean Merchants in Babylonia And Their Participation in Long-Distance Trade.' *WdO* 47/1 (2017): 25–51.
- . 'Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE'. PhD., University of Helsinki, 2018.

- Altmann, Peter. *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel: Deuteronomy's Identity Politics in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context*. Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 424. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.
- Ames, Frank Rithel. 'The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities'. In *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, edited by Brad E. Kelle, Frank Rithel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, 173–87. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2011.
- Aster, Shawn Zelig. 'Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian Melammu'. *Die Welt Des Orients* 45 (2015): 10–21.
- Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Babić, Staša. 'Status Identity and Archaeology'. In *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion*, edited by Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, 67–85. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Barmash, Pamela. 'Reimagining Exile Through the Lens of the Exodus: Turning Points in Israelite History and Texts'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Barstad, Hans M. *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the 'Exilic' Period*. Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Suppl., XXVIII. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996.
- . 'The City State of Jerusalem in the Neo-Babylonian Empire: Evidence from the Surrounding States'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, 34–48. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Barth, Fredrik. 'Introduction'. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, edited by Fredrik Barth, 9–38. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.
- Bartl, Peter Vinzenz. *Die Ritzverzierungen Auf Den Relieforthostaten Assurnasirpals II Aus Kalhu*. Baghdader Forschungen 25. Darmstadt: Philipp von Zabern, 2014.
- Beal, Timothy K., and David M. Gunn, eds. *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Beaulieu, Paul-Alain. *A History of Babylon: 2200 BC - AD 75*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018.

- Becking, Bob. 'Jojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25,27-30.' Pages 283-93 in *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies*. BETL. Edited by C. Breckelmans and J. Lust. Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1990.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1992.
- Ben-Dov, J. 'Time and Culture: Mesopotamian Calendars in Jewish Sources from the Bible to the Mishnah'. In *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, edited by Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, 217–54. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Bergmann, Claudia D. "'We Have Seen the Enemy, and He Is Only a 'She'": The Portrayal of Warriors as Women'. In *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethnicity in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, edited by Brad E. Kelle and Frank Rithchel Ames, 129–42. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2008.
- Berquist, Jon L. *Controlling Corporeality: The Body and the Household in Ancient Israel*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 2002.
- Bertholet, A., and K. Galling. *Hesekiel*. HAT 13. Tübingen, 1936.
- Bloch, Yigal. 'Judeans in Sippar and Susa during the First Century of the Babylonian Exile: Assimilation and Perseverance under Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Rule'. *JANEH* 1 (2014): 119–72.
- . *Alphabet Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform: Sēpiru Professionals in Mesopotamia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018.
- Block, Daniel I. *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*. NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997.
- . *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Bodi, Daniel. *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 104. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1991.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Bowen, Nancy R. 'The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23'. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118, no. 3 (1998): 417–33.
- . *Ezekiel*. AOTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 2010.

- Brenner, Athalya. *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible*. Biblical Interpretation Series 26. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- . 'On Color and the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible'. In *The Language of Color in the Mediterranean: An Anthology on Linguistic and Ethnographic Aspects of Color Terms*, edited by Alexander Borg, 200–207. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1999.
- Brown, Brian A. 'Culture on Display: Representations of Ethnicity in the Art of the Late Assyrian Empire'. In *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, edited by Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman, 515–42. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Brown, Marie Grace. *Khartoum at Night: Fashion and Body Politics in Imperial Sudan*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017.
- Campbell, William S. 'Identity'. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology*, edited by Samuel Balentine, I:501–6. New York: Oxford University, 2015.
- Carmi, Israel, and Dror Segal. '14C Dates from Kuntillet 'Ajrud'. In *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, edited by Ze'ev Meshel, 61–63. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012.
- Carroll, Robert P. 'Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora'. In *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology*, edited by Lester L. Grabbe, 62–79. *JSOT* Suppl. 278. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996.
- Cogan, Morton. 'A Technical Term for Exposure'. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1968): 133–35.
- Cogan, Mordechai. 'Into Exile: From the Assyrian Conquest of Israel to the Fall of Babylon'. In *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, edited by Michael D. Coogan, 242–75. Oxford: Oxford University, 1998.
- Cole, Steven W. *Nippur IV: The Early Neo-Babylonian Governor's Archive from Nippur*. Oriental Institute Publications 114. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1996.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Cook, Stephen L. 'Ezekiel's Recovery of Pre-Monarchic, Tribal Israel'. In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 360–73. *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

- Cooke, G.A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985.
- Cross, Frank Moore. 'The Arrow of Suwar, Retainer of 'Abday'. *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographic Studies* Joseph Aviram Volume (1996): 9\*-17\*.
- Crossland, Z. 'Materiality and Embodiment'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by D. Hicks and M.C. Beaudry, 386–405. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Crouch, C.L. *The Making of Israel*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 162. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- . *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, The Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, and the Nature of Subversion*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.
- . 'What Makes a Thing Abominable? Observations on the Language of Boundaries and Identity Formation from a Social Scientific Perspective'. *VT* 65 (2015): 516–41.
- Crowell, Bradley L. 'Nabonidus, as-Sila' and the Beginning of the End of Edom'. *BASOR* 348 (2007): 75–88.
- Daiches, Samuel. *The Jews in Babylonia in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah According to the Babylonian Inscriptions*. London: Jews' College Publications, 1910.
- Dalley, Stephanie. "The Transition from Neo-Assyrians to Neo-Babylonians: Break or Continuity? *Eretz Israel*, Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume (2003) 25-28.
- Daviau, P.M., and Margaret Steiner. 'A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat Al-Mudayna'. *BASOR* 320 (2000): 1–21.
- Davis, Ellen Frances. 'Swallowing Hard: Reflections on Ezekiel's Dumbness'. In *Signs and Wonders: Biblical Texts in Literary Focus*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum, 217–37. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 1989.
- Day, Peggy L. 'Adulterous Jerusalem's Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI'. *VT* 50, no. 3 (2000): 285–309.
- . 'A Prostitute Unlike Women: Whoring as Metaphoric Vehicle for Foreign Alliances'. In *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, edited by Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore. Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies 446. London & New York: T & T Clark, 2006.

- de Jong, Matthijs J. 'Ezekiel as a Literary Figure and the Quest for the Historical Prophet'. In *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*, edited by Johannes Tromp, 1–16. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Delitzsch, Friedrich, and S. Baer. 'Specimen Glossarii Ezechielico-Babylonici'. In *Liber Ezechielis*, x–xviii. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1884.
- Dewrell, Heath. "Human Beings as Ritual Objects: A Reexamination of Sefire I A, 35b-42," *Maarav* 17/1 (2010), 31-55.
- . 'Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel and Its Opponents'. PhD., Johns Hopkins University, 2012.
- Díaz-Andreu, Margarita, and Sam Lucy. 'Introduction'. In *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion*, edited by Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, 1–12. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Dietrich, Manfred, and Oswald Loretz. 'Der Vertrag Zwischen Šuppiluliuma Und Niqmandu: Eine Philologische Und Kulturhistorische Studie'. *Die Welt Des Orients* 3, no. 3 (1966): 206–45.
- Dion, P.E. 'Aramean Tribes and Nations of First Millennium Western Asia'. In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jack M. Sasson, 1281–94. New York: Hendrickson, 1995.
- Domeris, W.R. 'When Metaphor Becomes a Myth: A Socio-Linguistic Reading of Jeremiah'. Pages 244-62 in *Troubling Jeremiah*, edited by A.R.P. Diamond, K.M. O'Connor, and L. Stulman. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 260. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966.
- Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 56. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Ebeling, Erich. *Neubabylonische Briefe Aus Uruk*. BKRvO 1–4. Berlin: Ebeling, 1930.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. 'The Spectacle of the Female Head'. In *Off with Her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, 1–14. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Eph'al, Israel. 'The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th-5th Centuries BC: Maintenance and Cohesion'. *Orientalia NS* 47, no. 1 (1978): 74–90.

- Faust, Avraham. 'Judah in the Sixth Century BCE: A Rural Perspective'. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 135, no. 1 (2003): 37–53.
- Fischer, Gottfried, and Peter Riedesser. *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*. 3. aktualisierte und erweiterte Auflage. Stuttgart: UTB Ernst Reinhardt, 2003.
- Flynn, Shawn W. 'The Teraphim in Light of Mesopotamian and Egyptian Evidence'. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74 (2012): 694–711.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.
- Gal, Susan, and Judith T. Irvine. 'Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation'. In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity, 35–83. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2000.
- Galambush, Julie. *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 130. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 1992.
- . 'Necessary Enemies: Nebuchadnezzar, YHWH, and Gog in Ezekiel 38-39'. In *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past*, edited by Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore, 254–67. Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies 446. New York/ London: T & T Clark, 2006.
- Ganzel, Tova, and Shalom E. Holz. 'Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context'. *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 211–26.
- Garber, David G. Jr. 'Traumatizing Ezekiel, the Exilic Prophet'. In *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, edited by J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins, 2: From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision: 215–35. Westport, CT/ London: Praeger, 2004.
- . "'I Went in Bitterness:": Theological Implications of a Trauma Theory Reading of Ezekiel.' *Review and Expositor* 111, no. 4 (2014): 346–57.
- Garfinkel, Stephen P. 'Studies in Akkadian Influences in Ezekiel'. Columbia University, 1983.
- Gaspa, Salvatore. 'Garments, Parts of Garments, and Textile Techniques in the Assyrian Terminology: The Neo-Assyrian Textile Lexicon in the 1st Millennium BC Linguistic Context'. In *Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD*, edited by Salvatore Gaspa, Cécile Michel, and Marie-Louise Nosch, 47–90. Lincoln, Nebraska: Zea Books, 2017.
- Gibson, McGuire. 'Patterns of Occupation at Nippur'. In *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers Read at the 35e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Philadelphia*,

- 1988, edited by Maria deJong Ellis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1992.
- Giddens, Anthony. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- Gluska, Isaac. 'Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel'. In *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Jacob Klein*, edited by Yitschak Sefati, Pinhas Artzi, Chaim Cohen, Barry L. Eichler, and Victor A. Hurowitz, 718–37. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005.
- Görg, Manfred. 'Prachtgewänder Für Tyrus: Ein Hapax in Ez 27:24'. *Biblische Notizen* 17 (1982): 35–36.
- Gradwohl, Roland. *Die Farben Im Alten Testament: Eine Terminologische Studie*. BZAW 83. Berlin: Alfred Töpelman, 1963.
- Graf, Karl Heinrich. *Die Geschichtlichen Bücher Des Alten Testaments*. Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1866.
- Grayson, A.K. *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000.
- Greenberg, Moshe. *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 22. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983.
- . 'Nebuchadnezzar and the Parting of the Ways: Ezek 21:26-27'. In *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, edited by Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al, 267–71. Scripta Hierosolymitana 33. The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991.
- . *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible 22A. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Gruen, Erich. 'Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity? A Preliminary Probe'. *Phoenix* 67, no. 1/2 (2013): 1–22.
- Hackl, Johannes. 'Babylonian Scribal Practices in Rural Contexts: A Linguistic Survey of Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia (CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6)'. In *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria, Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle, 125–40. LAS 5. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017.



- Hackl, Johannes, Michael Jursa, and Martina Schmidl. 'Spätbabylonische Privatbriefe'. In *Spätbabylonische Briefe*, edited by Michael Jursa, Vol. 1. Dubsar 3. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014.
- Hall, Robert G. 'Circumcision'. In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 1:1025–31. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Halperin, David J. *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.
- Halpern, Baruch. 'Settlement of Canaan'. In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 5:1120–43. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Hamori, Esther J. *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Acts of Knowledge*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Haran, Menahem. 'Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School'. *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008): 211–18.
- . 'The Law-Code of Ezekiel XL-XLVIII and Its Relation to the Priestly School'. *HUCA* 50 (1979): 45–71.
- Hawkins, J.D. 'The Soul in the Stele.' In *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Alfonso Archi, 49-56. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- Hayes, Christine E. *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2002.
- Hendel, Ronald. *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Hilprecht, H.V., and A.T. Clay. *Business Documents of Murashû Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC)*. BE 9. Philadelphia, 1898.
- Hoffner, H.A. Jr. 'The Linguistic Origins of Teraphim'. *BSac* 124 (1967): 230–38.
- Hurowitz, Victor A. 'אֲבָן מַסֵּכִית: A New Interpretation'. *JBL* 118, no. 2 (1999): 201–8.
- Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith. 'Introduction'. In *Ethnicity*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, 3–14. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Iwry, Samuel. 'New Evidence for Belomancy in Ancient Palestine and Phoenicia'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 81, no. 1 (1961): 27–34.
- Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976.

- Joannès, F., and A. Lemaire. 'Trois Tablettes Cunéiformes à l'onomastique Ouest-Sémitique'. *Transeuphratène* 17 (1999): 17–34.
- Jones, Gwilym H. *1 and 2 Kings*. NCBC. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Jones, Siân. *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*. London & New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Kamionkowski, S. Tamar. 'Gender Ambiguity and Subversive Metaphor in Ezekiel 16'. Brandeis University, 2000.
- . *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos: A Study on the Book of Ezekiel*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 368. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Kamionkowski, S. Tamar, and Wonil Kim. *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. New York: T & T Clark, 2010.
- Kaufman, Stephen A. *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago Assyriological Studies 19. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Keel, Othmar. *Jahwe-Visionen Und Siegelkunst: Eine Neue Deutung Der Majestätschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 Und 10 Und Sach 4*. SBS, 84/85. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977.
- Kelle, Brad E. 'Wartime Rhetoric: Prophetic Metaphorization of Cities as Female'. In *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, edited by Brad E. Kelle and Frank Rithel Ames, 95–111. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
- . 'Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of the Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel'. *JBL* 128, no. 3 (2009): 469–90.
- Kingsley, Peter. 'Ezekiel by the Grand Canal: Between Jewish and Babylonian Tradition'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, no. 2 (1992): 339–46.
- Kitz, Anne Marie. 'The Hebrew Terminology of Lot Casting and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context'. *CBQ* 62, no. 2 (2000): 207–14.
- Klein, Anja. 'Salvation for Sheep and Bones: Ezek 34 and 37 as Corner Pillars of Ezekiel's Prophecy of Salvation'. In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 179–93. *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

- Klein, Ralph W. 'Israel in Exile After Thirty Years'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, 9–19. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Klostermann, A. 'Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs,' *ZTK* 38 (1877) 401–445.
- Knohl, Israel. *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Kohn, Risa Levitt. *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 358. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Konkel, Michael. *Architektonik Des Heiligen: Studien Zur Zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40-48)*. Bonner Biblische Beiträge 129. Berlin: Philo, 2001.
- Korpel, Marjo C.A. 'Avian Spirits in Ugarit and in Ezekiel 13.' In *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture*, edited by N. Wyatt et al., 99–113. Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1996.
- Krulfeld, Ruth M., and Linda A. Camino. 'Introduction'. In *Reconstructing Lives, Recapturing Meaning: Refugee Identity, Gender, and Culture Change*, edited by Ruth M. Krulfeld and Linda A. Camino, ix–xviii. Basel: Gordon and Breach, 1994.
- Kutsko, John. *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*. Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 7. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000.
- Landsberger, B., and H. Tadmor. 'Fragments of Clay Liver Models from Hazor'. *IEJ* 14, no. 4 (1964): 201–18.
- Lapsley, Jacqueline E. 'The Proliferation of Grotesque Bodies in Ezekiel: The Case of Ezekiel 23'. In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 377–90. *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- Lauinger, Jacob. 'Neo-Assyrian Scribes, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty," and the Dynamics of Textual Mass Production'. In *Texts and Contexts: The Circulation and Transmission of Cuneiform Texts in Social Space*, edited by Paul Delnero and Jacob Lauinger, 285–314. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Launderville, Dale F. 'The Threat of Syncretism to Ezekiel's Exilic Audience in the Dry Bones Passage'. *WdO* 45 (2015): 38–49.
- Layard, A.H. *Nineveh and Its Remains*. London: J. Murray, 1849.

- Lee, Lydia. *Mapping Judah's Fate in Ezekiel's Oracles Against the Nations*. Ancient Near Eastern Monographs 15. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.
- . 'The Enemies Within: Gog of Magog in Ezekiel 38-39'. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 2017, 1–7.
- Lemos, T.M. 'The Emasculation of Exile: Hypermasculinity and Feminization in the Book of Ezekiel'. In *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, edited by Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, 377–94. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 10. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.
- . "'They Have Become Women': Judean Diaspora and Postcolonial Theories of Gender and Migration'. In *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by Saul M. Olyan, 81–109. Society of Biblical Literature Recourses for Biblical Study 71. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012.
- Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*. HSM 10. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976.
- Lewis, Theodore J. 'CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 1 (1996): 28–47.
- . "'You Have Heard What the Kings of Assyria Have Done:" Disarmament Passages Vis-à-Vis Assyrian Rhetoric of Intimidation". In *Isaiah's Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations*, edited by Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, 75–100. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- . *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming.
- Liebkind, Karmela, Tuuli Anna Mähönen, Sirkku Varjonen, and Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti. 'Acculturation and Identity'. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry, Second., 30–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016.
- Lilly, Ingrid E. *Two Books of Ezekiel: Papyrus 967 and the Masoretic Text as Variant Literary Editions*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Limmer, Abigail S. 'Dress, Bronze and Iron Age'. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*, edited by Daniel M. Master, 318–28. Oxford: Oxford University, 2013.
- Lipschits, Oded. *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah Under Babylonian Rule*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

- Liverani, Mario. 'The Trade Network of Tyre According to Ezek 27'. In *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, edited by Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al, 65–79. Scripta Hierosolymitana, XXXIII. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991.
- Livingstone, Alasdair. *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*. SAA 3. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989.
- Lorber, Judith. *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Low, K.B. 'Implications Surrounding Girding the Loins in Light of Gender, Body, and Power'. *JSOT* 36 (2011): 3–30.
- Lucy, Sam. 'Ethnic and Cultural Identities'. In *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion*, edited by Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, 86–109. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
- . 'The Archaeology of Age'. In *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion*, edited by Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, 43–66. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Lyons, Michael A. 'Transformation of Law: Ezekiel's Use of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26)'. In *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*, edited by William A. Tooman and Michael A. Lyons, 1–32. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 2010.
- Mackenzie, Simon R.M. 'Dig a Bit Deeper: Law, Regulation and the Illicit Antiquities Market'. In *Art, Cultural Heritage, and the Law: Cases and Materials*, edited by Patty Gerstenblith, Third Edition., 632–43. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2012.
- Magdalene, F. Rachel, and Cornelia Wunsch. 'Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience'. In *Slaves and Households in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Laura Culbertson, 113–34. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Malul, Meir. *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism*. AOAT. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988.
- . 'Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16:1-7'. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46 (1990): 97–121.
- Mankowski, Paul V. *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*. Harvard Semitic Studies. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

- Marzouk, Safwat. *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel*. Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 76. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.
- Masterman, E.W.G. *Hygiene and Disease in Palestine in Modern and Biblical Times*. London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1918.
- Matthews, Victor H. 'The Anthropology of Clothing in the Joseph Narrative'. *JSOT* 65 (1995): 25–36.
- Mauss, Marcel. 'Techniques of the Body'. *Economy and Society* 2 (1973): 70–88.
- Mazar, Amihai. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 BCE*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- McCall, Robin C. 'The Body and Being of God in Ezekiel'. *Review and Expositor* 111, no. 4 (2014): 376–89.
- Mein, Andrew. *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University, 2001.
- Mendenhall, George E., and Gary A. Herion. 'Covenant'. In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 1:1179–1202. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Meshel, Ze'ev. 'The Nature of the Site and Its Biblical Background'. In *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, 65–69. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012.
- Meskell, Lynn M., and Rosemary A. Joyce. *Embodied Lives: Figuring Ancient Maya and Egyptian Experience*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Mettinger, Tryggve N.D. *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kābôd Theologies*. ConBOT 18. Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1982.
- Middlemas, Jill. *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University, 2005.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance*. SLJA 18. Leiden: Brill, 1976.
- . 'Two Biblical Hebrew Priestly Terms: Šeqeš and Ṭāmē'. *Maarav* 8 (1992): 107–16.
- Milgrom, Jacob, and Daniel I. Block. *Ezekiel's Hope: A Commentary on Ezekiel 38-48*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012.

- Mills, Mary E. *Alterity, Pain, and Suffering in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel*. Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies 479. New York/ London: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Morgenstern, Julian. *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites*. Chicago: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966.
- Moughtin-Mumby, Sharon. *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Nevader, Madhavi. 'Picking up the Pieces of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40-48?' In *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, edited by Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, 268–91. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Niditch, Susan. *My Brother Esau Is a Hairy Man: Hair and Identity in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Nihan, Christophe. 'Ethnicity and Identity in Isaiah 56-66'. In *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, 67–104. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- Nissinen, Martti. '(How) Does the Book of Ezekiel Reveal Its Babylonian Context?' *WdO* 45 (2015): 85–98.
- Noegel, Scott B. 'Scarlet and Harlots: Seeing Red in the Hebrew Bible'. *HUCA* 87 (2016): 1–47.
- Oded, Bustenay. 'Where Is the "Myth of the Empty Land" to Be Found? History Versus Myth'. In *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, edited by Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp, 55–74. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Odell, Margaret S. 'Ezekiel Saw What He Said He Saw: Genres, Forms, and the Vision of Ezekiel 1'. In *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, 162–76. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003.
- . *Ezekiel*. Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2005.
- . 'Fragments of Traumatic Memory: Šalmê Zākār and Child Sacrifice in Ezekiel 16:15-22'. In *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, edited by Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, 107–24. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.
- Olyan, Saul M. 'Mary Douglas' Holiness/ Wholeness Paradigm: Its Potential for Insight and Its Limitations'. *JHS* 8 (2010): 55–74.

- Parpola, Simo, and Kazuko Watanabe. *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*. SAA 2. Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1988.
- Patton, Corrine L. “‘Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?’ A Response to Feminist Critiques of Ezekiel 23”. In *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong, 221–38. SBL Symposium Series 9. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000.
- Pearce, Laurie E. ‘Judean: A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia’. In *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, 267–77. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- . ‘Continuity and Normality in Sources Relating to the Judean Exile’. *HeBAI* 3 (2014): 163–84.
- . ‘Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: An Overview’. *Religion Compass* 10, no. 9 (2016): 230–43.
- Pearce, Laurie E., and Cornelia Wunsch. *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*. CUSAS 28. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014.
- Pilcher, Jane. ‘Names, Bodies, and Identities’. *Sociology* 50, no. 4 (2016): 764–79.
- Pohlmann, Karl-Friedrich. ‘Ezekiel: New Directions and Current Debates’. In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 3–17. *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament* 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- Poser, Ruth. *Das Ezechielbuch Als Trauma-Literatur*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 154. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- . ‘No Words: The Book of Ezekiel as Trauma Literature and a Response to Exile’. In *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, edited by Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, 27–48. *Semeia Studies* 86. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.
- Reade, Julian. ‘Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet: Power-Dressing at the Assyrian Court’. In *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola*, edited by Mikko Luukko, Saana Svärd, and Raija Mattila, 239–64. *Studia Orientalia* 106. Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society, 2009.
- Reed, William. ‘Yahweh’s “Cruel Sword”: The Manifestation of Punishment and the Trauma of Exile’. PhD, Johns Hopkins University, 2018.
- Reinhold, Meyer. *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity*. Collection Latomus 116. Brussels: Latomus, 1970.



- Roach, Mary Ellen, and Joanne Bubolz Eicher. 'The Language of Personal Adornment'. In *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, edited by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, 7–21. The Hague: Mouton, 1979.
- Rollston, Christopher A. *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2010.
- Römer, Thomas. *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen Zur Väterthematik Im Deuteronomium Und in Der Deuteronomistischen Tradition*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 99. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990.
- Rom-Shiloni, Dalit. 'From Ezekiel to Ezra-Nehemiah: Shifts of Group Identities Within Babylonian Exilic Ideology'. In *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, 127–51. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- . *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th-5th Centuries BCE)*. Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies 543. New York/ London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Roth, Martha. *Babylonian Marriage Agreements*. AOAT 222. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989.
- Rudmin, Floyd W. 'Critical History of the Acculturation Psychology of Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalization'. *Review of General Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2003): 3–37.
- Sam, David L., and John W. Berry. 'Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet'. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5, no. 4 (2010): 472–81.
- . 'Introduction'. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry, Second., 1–7. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016.
- . 'Theoretical Perspectives'. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry, Second., 11–29. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016.
- Sass, Benjamin. 'Inscribed Babylonian Arrowheads of the Turn of the Second Millennium and Their Phoenician Counterparts'. *UF* 21 (1989): 349–56.
- . *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium*. JIATAU Occasional Publications 4. Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2005.

- Schmitt, John J. 'Psychoanalyzing Ezekiel'. In *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, edited by J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins, 2: From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision:185–201. Westport, CT/ London: Praeger, 2004.
- Schmitt, Rüdiger. 'Rites of Family and Household Religion'. In *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant*, edited by Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, 387–426. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012.
- Schwarz, Ronald A. 'Uncovering the Secret Vice: Toward an Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment'. In *The Fabrics of Culture. The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, edited by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, 23–45. The Hague: Mouton, 1979.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History*. Revised Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Sedlmeier, Franz. 'The Proclamation of Salvation in the Book of Ezekiel: Restoration or Traces of "Eschatological" Hope?' In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 31–53. Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- Sheffer, Avigail, and Amalia Tidhar. 'Textiles and Basketry'. In *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, edited by Ze'ev Meshel, 289–311. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012.
- Smith, Daniel L. *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*. Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989.
- Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- . 'Deconstructing Terror in Ezekiel: The "Valley of Bones" Vision as Response to Trauma'. In *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions*, edited by William A. Tooman and Penelope Barter, 391–416. Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Sommer, Benjamin D. *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Sparks, Kenton L. *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998.

- Stager, Lawrence E. 'Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel'. Pages 123-75 in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, edited by Michael D. Coogan. Oxford: Oxford University, 1998.
- Starr, Ivan. *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*. SAA 4. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990.
- Stavrakopoulou, Francesca. 'Making Bodies: On Body Modification and Religious Materiality in the Hebrew Bible'. *HeBAI* 2, no. 4 (2013): 532–53.
- Stökl, Jonathan. 'The *mtnb 'wt* in Ezekiel 13 Reconsidered'. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 1 (2013): 61–76.
- . 'Schoolboy Ezekiel: Remarks on the Transmission of Learning'. *Die Welt Des Orients* 45 (2015): 50–61.
- . 'A Youth Without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent: Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture'. In *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context*, edited by Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggars, 223–52. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Stolper, Matthew W. *Entrepreneurs and Empire: The Murašu Archive, the Murašu Firm, and Persian Rule in Babylonia*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1985.
- Strine, Casey A. *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile*. BZAW 436. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2013.
- . 'Chaoskampf Against Empire: YHWH's Battle Against Gog (Ezekiel 38-39) as Resistance Literature'. In *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, edited by Alan Lenzi and Jonathan Stökl, 87–108. ANEM 7. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014.
- Strong, John T. 'God's Kabod: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel'. In *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, 69–95. SBL Symposium Series 9. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000.
- Stulman, Louis. 'Ezekiel as Disaster/ Survival Literature: Speaking on Behalf of the Losers'. In *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration*, edited by Mark J. Boda and et al, 133–45. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015.
- Tamber-Rosenau, Caryn. 'Striking Women: Performance and Gender in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature'. Vanderbilt University, 2015.
- Tajfel, Henri. 'Introduction'. In *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, edited by Henri Tajfel, 1–11. European Studies in Social Psychology. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982.

- Tarlin, J.W. 'Utopia and Pornography in Ezekiel: Violence, Hope, and the Shattered Male Subject'. In *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, edited by Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn, 175–83. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Thavapalan, Shiyanthi, Jens Stenger, and Carol Snow. 'The Meaning of Color in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Case of Egyptian Blue'. *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie* 106, no. 2 (2016): 198–214.
- Taylor, J. Glen. *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel*. JSOT Suppl. 111. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Tolini, Gauthier. 'La Babylonie et l'Iran'. PhD., Université Paris I - Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2011.
- van der Toorn, Karel. 'The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence'. *CBQ* 52 (1990): 203–22.
- . 'Mesopotamian Prophecy Between Immanence and Transcendence: A Comparison of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy'. In *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*, edited by Martti Nissinen, 71–87. Symposium Series 13. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000.
- van der Toorn, Karel and Theodore J. Lewis. 'Tērāpîm'. In *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, 8:766–78. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995.
- Torrey, Charles Cutler. *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930.
- Turner, Terence S. 'The Social Skin'. In *Not Work Alone*, edited by J. Cherfas and R. Lewin, 112–40. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980.
- Turner, Bryan S. *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. Second Edition. Theory, Culture, and Society. London: Sage, 1996.
- Uehlinger, Christoph, and Susanne Müller Trufaut. 'Ezekiel I, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement'. *TZ* 57 (2001): 140–71.
- Vanderhooft, David Stephen. *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*. Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 59. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999.
- . 'Ezekiel in and on Babylon'. In *Bible et Proche-Orient, Mélanges André Lemaire*, edited by J. Elayi and M. Durand, 3:99–119. Paris: Gabalda, 2014.

- van der Kolk, Bessel A. 'Trauma and Memory.' In *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, edited by Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. MacFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth, First Paperback Ed., New York: The Guilford Press, 2006.
- Van de Vijver, Fons J.R, John W. Berry, and Ozgur Celenk. 'Assessment of Acculturation'. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry, Second Ed., 93–112. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016.
- Van Dijk-Hemmes, Fokkelein. 'The Metaphorisation of Women in Prophetic Speech: An Analysis of Ezekiel XXIII.' VT 43 (1993) 162-70.
- Van Seters, John. *Prologue to History*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.
- Van Wolputte, S. 'Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 251–69.
- Volkan, Vamik D. *Psychoanalysis, International Relations, and Diplomacy: A Sourcebook on Large-Group Psychology*. London: Karnak Books Ltd., n.d.
- Waerzeggers, Caroline. 'Babylonians in Susa: The Travels of Babylonian Businessmen to Susa Reconsidered'. In *Der Achämenidenhof/ The Achaemenid Court: Akten Des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums Zum Thema 'Vorderasien Im Spannungsfeld Klassischer Und Altorientalistischer Überlieferungen,' Landgut Castelen Bei Basel, 23.-25. May 2007*, edited by B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger, 777–813. *Classica et Orientalia* 2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010.
- . 'Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts'. In *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians in Antiquity*, edited by Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, 131–46. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- . 'Review Article: Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer'. *Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 33 (2015): 179–94.
- Weidner, Ernst F. 'Jojachin, König von Juda, in Babylonischen Keilschrifttexten'. In *Mélanges Syriens Offerts a Monsieur René Dussaud*, 2:923–35. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1939.
- Weiss, Meira. *The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Westbrook, Raymond. "Old Babylonian Marriage Law." PhD. diss., Yale University, 1989.

- Wiggerman, F.A.M. 'Agriculture as Civilization: Sages, Farmers, and Barbarians'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, edited by Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson, 663–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Wilson, Robert R. 'An Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness'. *VT* 22 (1972): 91–104.
- . 'Forced Migration and the Formation of the Prophetic Literature'. In *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exilic Period*, edited by John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, 125–38. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Winitzer, Abraham. 'Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian Literati'. In *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, edited by Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, 163–216. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Wiseman, D.J. *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Wright, G. Ernest. 'The Discoveries at Megiddo 1935-39'. *BA* 13, no. 2 (1950): 28–46.
- Wunsch, Cornelia. 'Glimpses of the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia'. In *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium BC*, edited by Angelika Berlejung and Michael Streck, 247–60. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013.
- . *Judeans by the Waters of Babylon. New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia in the Schøyen Collection*. BaAr 6. Dresden: ISLET, forthcoming.
- Yadin, Yigael. *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study*. Vol. 2. New York/ Toronto/ London: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
- Yaron, Reuven. *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.
- Yee, Gale. 'By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4'. *Semeia* 61 (1993): 99–132.
- Zadok, Ran. *The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods According to the Babylonian Sources*. Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel 3. Haifa: The University of Haifa Press, 1979.
- . 'The Representation of Foreigners in Neo- and Late-Babylonian Legal Documents (Eighth through Second Centuries BCE)'. In *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, edited by Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp, 471–589. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Ziderman, Irving. 'First Identification of Authentic Tēkēlet'. *BASOR* 265 (1987): 25–33.

Zimmerli, Walther. *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*. Translated by Ronald E. Clements. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

———. *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*. Translated by James D. Martin. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

## **Rosanne R. Liebermann**

### Curriculum Vitae

Born: July 10, 1991  
Durban, Republic of South Africa

### **EDUCATION**

- 2019            Ph.D., Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Philology  
                  Department of Near Eastern Studies  
                  Johns Hopkins University
- 2018            M.A., Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Philology  
                  Department of Near Eastern Studies  
                  Johns Hopkins University
- 2013            B.A. Hons, Theology  
                  Faculty of Theology and Religion  
                  University of Oxford

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **Manuscripts in Submission**

- Expected      “The Apparel Oft Proclaims the Man: Clothing and Identity in Ezekiel  
2020            23.”  
                  *Die Welt des Orients* 50/2.

#### **Educational Materials**

- 2019            “Ezekiel’s Unruly Women.”  
                  Point of View Publishing: Customized Course Readings.

#### **Book Reviews**

- 2015            Ernest Nicholson. *Deuteronomy and the Judaeon Diaspora*. New York:  
                  Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xi + 196.  
                  *Biblical Interpretation* 23/3 (2015) 461-63.

### **AWARDS AND HONORS**

- 2018-19        The Dean’s Teaching Fellowship  
                  Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins University
- 2018-19        George A. Barton Fellowship  
                  The W.F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research, Jerusalem



- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 2018    | Stulman Research Award<br>Stulman Program in Jewish Studies, Johns Hopkins University                 |
| 2017-18 | Ray Westbrook Award<br>Stulman Program in Jewish Studies, Johns Hopkins University                    |
| 2017    | Faculty Support Award<br>Adjunct Faculty Advisory Committee, University of Maryland, Baltimore County |
| 2016-17 | Alvin H. Blum Fellowship<br>Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University                            |
| 2014    | Hodson Fellowship in the Humanities<br>Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins University  |
| 2013-14 | William S. Rayner Fellowship for Semitic Studies<br>Near Eastern Studies, Johns Hopkins University    |
| 2013    | Ellerton Theological Essay Prize<br>University of Oxford  |
| 2013    | Senior Pusey and Ellerton Hebrew Prize<br>University of Oxford  |
| 2011-12 | Erasmus Fellowship for Study Abroad<br>Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, Germany       |

## CONFERENCES

### Papers Presented

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2018 | “Brides, Prostitutes, and Witches: Gendered Identities in the Book of Ezekiel.”<br>Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting.  |
| 2017 | “Assyrians in Blue, Babylonians in Red: Clothing and Acculturation in Ezekiel 23.”<br>Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting.   |
| 2017 | “The Apparel Oft Proclaims the Man (or Woman): Clothing and Identity in the Book of Ezekiel.”<br>Symposium on the Construction of Identity in the Ancient Near East at the University of Helsinki. |

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### **University of Maryland, Baltimore County**

Judaism in the Time of Jesus and Hillel (Spring 2018)

Israel and the Ancient Near East (Fall 2017)

### **Johns Hopkins University**

From Hebrews to Jews: The Development of Jewish Identity in the Ancient World (Spring 2019)

Hebrew Prose Reading (Fall 2016)

Elementary Hebrew II (Spring 2016)

Elementary Hebrew I (Fall 2015)

## EXTRA TRAINING

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 2015-16 | Preparing Future Faculty Teaching Academy<br>Center for Educational Resources, Johns Hopkins University.                               |
| 2015    | School of Criticism and Theory, Cornell University<br>“The Story of Reason in Islam” Seminar with Sari Nusseibeh (Al-Quds University). |
| 2014    | Tayinat Lower Town Project Archaeological Survey, Hatay Province, Turkey<br>Dr. James Osborne (University of Chicago).                 |

## LANGUAGES

### **Ancient:**

Hebrew; Akkadian; Aramaic; Ugaritic; Canaanite Dialects; *Koine* Greek

### **Modern:**

German (Reading and Speaking); French (Reading)

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)

American School of Oriental Research (ASOR)